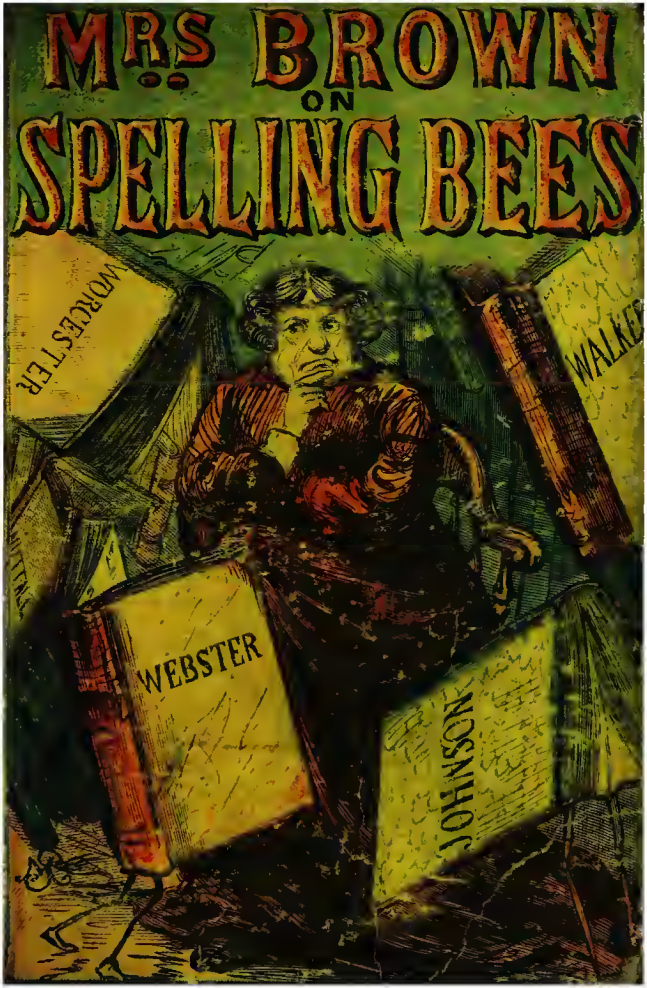
MRS BROWN ON SPELLING BEES



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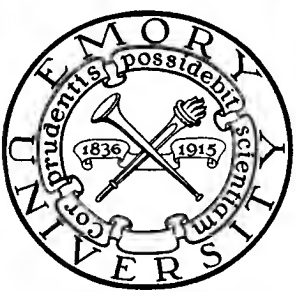

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ON

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MRS. BROWN ON SPELLING BEES.

INTRODUCTION.

ALL as I've got to say about spellin' is as it's all rubbish 'ow you does it, so long as any one can make out wot you means, as is a deal more than I can do with most books as comes in my way, as is all fine words and larnin', as I don't believe them as 'rites 'em knows wot they're a-talkin' about; and as to them as reads 'em, why, they don't try, and only 'olds the books in their 'ands jest for the look of the thing, as the sayin' is; whilst some only 'aves 'em cos they've got back rooms, as is dingy 'oles, with easy-chairs and good fires, as they calls liberies, like Alderman Wittles, as never did nothink in there but 'ave his nap in 'is easy-chair arter dinner, as avo 'eard 'im snorin' thro' the door myself, with a good book open on the table afore 'im, and lots more in the bookcases round the walls,

as was shet in with brass cris-cross work and silk curtains, and I'm surc not opened from one year's end to another, tho' always kep dusted with a feather brush; and I don't think as my lady were much of a 'and at spellin', for she 'ave been 'eard to ask 'er dorter 'ow many g's there was in pigs; and must say myself if carridge folks don't care about spellin', it's like serviuts' impidence a-settin' their-selves up to know more than their betters; not but wot all my children is scolars; but I'm sure there's many a score as 'ave got on well in this world, and gone to a better, as didn't know b from a bull's foot, as the sayin is.

I'm sure I likes young people to be edicated; but it ain't bringin' 'em up proper to teach 'em nothin' but 'ritin' and readin', as only leads to scribblin' when they did ought to be doin' of their work, or readin' rubbishy books when they did ought to be mendin' of their stockins; and the trollops as you'll see about the streets a-goin' to their work with a novel in their 'ands and their gownds all rags a-trailin' in the dirt, as a stitch in time saves nine, as the sayin' is, as might 'ave been up in time to 'ave made theirselves decent afore comin' out, with their 'air decent, let alone a-brushin' of the stale mud off the flounces, as they've been a-draggin' about the streets overnight.

It does put me out to see a lot of young gals

a-goin' to work in the mornin' such dirty drabs, as earns good wages, and spends every penny on dress, and won't go to service, cos they can't 'ave their evenins to theirselves, and be a-galawantin' about with their pals all day of a Sunday; as leads to nice misery in the end, leastways I never knowed any good come of young people a-trollopin' and a-trapesin' about the Park all day, as isn't ways as I'd ever allow no dorter of mine to go on; the same as Melia Summers, as got married under eighteen, to a bit of whipper-snapper of a errand-boy, in the name of Maltby, as wasn't six months older, and a nice life they led one another, a-lodgin' along with Mrs. Jarvis, as let 'em 'er top front room, as were all werry well if they'd 'ave 'ad any sense in their two 'eads, and not 'ave been out for everlastin' of a evenin', as I told 'er would reglar unsettle both on 'em, and so it did, for they was separated under the year; and goodness knows wot become of 'er all the time, or 'ow she lived; but as for 'im, he 'adn't no constitution to stand agin a illness, and died in the 'Ospital under a operation, and wouldn't 'ave 'ad no one to see 'im laid in the grave decent but for me and Mrs. Jarvis a-goin' to see 'im the arternoon before he died, as begged of us to try and find out 'is wife, as he did so long to see 'er once more. So I didu't make 'im no promise, but thinks to myself I'll try and find 'er, for

singler enuf I'd 'eard of 'er the day afore thro' our gal a-goin' along with 'er father and mother to one of them music 'alls, and told me as she were certing as Mrs. Maltby were among the dancers. So I says to Mrs. Jarvis as I thought we might find 'er, so accordin' arter tea we both went to that music 'all, as were werry lovely, and certingly done up beautiful, with looking-glasses all round the walls, and red welwet chairs fit for Queen Wictorier to set down upon, and parties a-takin' of their refreshments quite respectable, and a-behavin' theirselves quite up to the 'nocker, as the sayin' is.

It were all werry lovely, specially the singers, as 'ad low neck dresses like a ball room, and sung that beautiful, jest for all the world like the Operer; and then there were a party as come in dressed up like a reglar tip-top swell, as were werry amusin' and sung delightful, as is a wonderful thing to listen to, and all for a shillin' with the bally to wind up; but I couldn't see nothink of Melia among the dancers; so I says to Mrs. Jarvis, "I'll go and ask if they knows anythink on 'er at the bar."

A werry nice-spoke young lady told me to go to the purfessional entrance and ask, as I did, and the party at the door told me as he thought she were only a sort of a extra one as they 'ad for grand nights, to fill up. He didn't know where she lived, but thought he knowed a party as did, in the name

of Tayler, as were jest then a-passin' in at the door, with a parcel under 'er arm.

She wouldn't tell me anythink about Melia when fust I spoke to 'er; but when I said wot I wanted with 'er, she give me the address, and said as she lodged along with 'er.

I've see many dog-'oles as no pig would 'ardly lay down in, but never did see sich a 'ouse as that as I went to and found Melia in the top back on. She were settin' all of a 'eap by a bit of fire that untidy as looked more like a cinder-sifter than any one as could dance, tho' she were a-workin' away at some finery. When I told her wot I'd come about, she were werry short, and said, "He's treated me shameful, for he beat me and turned me out of the room, cos I 'adn't got no more money to give 'im, and went on like a blackguard, and now it's come 'ome to 'im."

"Yes," I says, "it 'ave, and it'll come 'ome to us all some day, and then we all 'opes for mercy, tho' werry few on us don't deserve none, and," I says, "if, when that time comes to you, and you don't want no mercy showed you, why, then," I says, "you can afford to be unforgivin' to the man as you vowed for to love till death did you part."

She says, "Oh! he ain't a-dyin' I've knowed him afore and 'is kiddin' ways."

I says, "All right. Then I'm to go back and

tell 'im as you won't 'ave nothink to say to 'im, livin' nor dyin'."

She says, "I don't wish 'im no 'arm, but he never showed no feelin' for me when my baby died, and said it were a good riddance."

"Ah," I says, "there's a many on us as says things like that as we're sorry for on our death-bed, when we're a-layin' awake all night and can't shet our eyes for pain, and would give anythink for a little sleep, with the bed a-feelin' like shavin's under us, and not able to make our 'eads lay easy no 'ow, when them as is a-settin' up with us 'as dozed off, and all is that still, and our own thoughts come up to torment us, and we thinks 'ow orful it would be if we was to go on like that for ever and ever, when we can't pray, nor bring ourselves to think good." I says, "I've seen sich death-beds; ah! and them as 'ave lived with all as they could wish for about 'em, cos it ain't dyin' in the work'us or the 'ospital as is any more sufferin', but it's a uneasy conshence as torments parties, as can't rest not on all the feather beds and down pillers as ever was made, nor yet a grand four-poster with fine curtins and coverlids, as will give a minnit's rest; so," I says, "good-bye, and remember wot I says."

And out of the room I was a-walkin', when she jumps up and says, "Stop a bit; I'll come."

We got a cab close by and drove to the 'ospital

jest on ten o'clock, and tho' they let us in, it was ever so long afore she could get upstairs, for she turned that faint and ill in the 'all as they was obligated to give 'er a draft to bring 'er to. So I got Mrs. Jarvis to stop along with 'er downstairs, whilst I went up to 'im jest for to prepare 'im like, but when I got into the ward the nuss put up her finger and shook her 'ead, with a look at the bed, as showed me as it were nearly all over.

She were a kind-'earted soul that nuss, for seein' as my breath were that short thro' them stairs, she wouldn't let me run down agin, but went 'erself to fetch that miserable creetur up, as come into the ward all of a tremble, and a-lookin' like death 'erself. So I took 'old of 'er and led 'er to 'is bedside, but he didn't take no notice.

She bust out a-cryin' when she see 'im, as made 'im open 'is eyes jest a minnit, and then go off agin.

We set and watched him for more than a 'our, and then he begun bein' restless, and I give 'im a little drink, as were only jest wettin' of 'is lips, and then I give 'er the cup and says, "See if he won't take a little from you."

So she bent over 'im, a-sayin', "Jem, dear, take a drop of this."

He seemed to know 'er woice, for a smile come over 'is face, and he took a good drink, and then

put up 'is poor thin 'and, as she took 'old on and kissed as the tears was a-runnin' down 'er cheeks, and she dropped on 'er knees by the side of the bed and says, "Jem, dear, pray forgive me. I didn't know you was so bad."

He opened 'is eyes, raised 'isself in the bed, and took 'er 'ead in 'is 'ands, and drored 'er to 'im, and kissed 'er; that were all, for the next minnit he was gone, let's 'ope, to a better world.

She didn't shriek, nor yet cry, but let me take her away, and Mrs. Jarvis 'ad 'im brought to 'er 'ouse, as we berried him from decent the next Sunday, and I got a lady as I knowed to get her into a institution, but she didn't live more than six months. So there was an end of them two and their filanderin' ways, poor things, as was all thro' thinkin' of nothink but pleasure, as don't do in the long run, cos as you makes your bed so you must lay on it, as the sayin' is.

I'm sure there's 'underds upon 'underds as never thinks of a rainy day, but speuds every penny as they can earn on their backs and amusements. I always says to parties as asks my adwice, it's far better for a young ooman to go to service and 'ave a good 'ome and not too much liberty; tho' in course there's pleuty of bad places as well as bad servints, and I'm sure there's parties as'll put a gal to sleep in a reglar dog-'ole and feed 'em shameful,

with wages as ain't 'ardly shoe leather, and then send 'em to die in a 'ospital thro' a cold a-settlin' on their lungs, as was brought on by sweepin' up the snow, or a damp back kitchen, as ain't doin' as you'd be done by, and that's 'ow it is as things all goes wrong in this world.

But as to lady 'elps, that's all rubbish, for it's 'igh time as you drops the lady when you comes to washin' other people's dishes, tho' in course you may be the lady in your feelin's and behaviour, tho' you did go out a-charin' for arf a-day, or only got sixpence a-week and your breakfast for cleanin' anyone's doorstep; not as I'd pay anyone like that, as is all as old Sinful's squintin' dorter give poor Mary Ann Lovechild, as lived along with 'er grandmother, and would 'ave made a good servint, only took to the brick-makin' as 'ad killed 'er mother, and pretty soon turned 'er into clay: as was as well, for no decent gal would care for such a wild life; but, law, there's some young people as is as wild as partridges and 'ares, and others as is as quiet as mice, and as steady as rocks; but as to old Sinful, I do believe as he'd feed a servint on a flint as he'd been and skinned first, for they never got nothink for dinner but bullock's liver and sprats, with odds and ends, as ain't nourishment for a growin' gal; and as to that old willin a-sayin' as I was a-tryin' to take 'is life, thro' a-shettin' down the lead o 'is

dust 'ole with a close-prop, never dreamin' as he were there with 'is 'ead in it a-lookin' for a tea-spoon as he'd missed, as were only Brittanier mettle. For I smelt that dust 'ole werry unpleasant over the wall, and seein' of it wide opin, thought as the gal 'ad left it like that, so takes the prop and give the lead a push, aud down it went with a wiolent crash, and I 'eard a noise of a loud 'owl, and so gets up our steps and looks over the wall and see old Sinful cort by the 'ead like a mouse in a trap, a-kickin' wiolent, so I reaches over, aud 'ooked the dust 'ole lead up, as I'm sorry I did, for instead of thankin' me for settin' 'im free that old wiper set to and abused me that wiolent that I give 'im a tin of soap-suds all over 'im, and would 'ave give 'im the close-prop too, for no man shan't call me uames as is only fit for a dog, not if they was uaybours twenty times over and over agin, as I 'ates iu a general way, thro' always a-pryin' and a-spyin' with talkin' over the wall, and werry ofteu wrong, about parties' characters, as may often turn out to be married; jest the same as poor Mrs. Welbyn's 'arf sister, as looked a gal with that bouncin' boy, and 'er 'usban' a printer, as only come 'ome with daylight, and went out at dusk, as if that were any proof as he were a-wisitin' of 'er on the sly, as is wot that Mrs. Welbyn set about a-sayin' all over the place, and couldn't prove 'er words, and did ought to 'ave been stood in a white sheet at the

chnrch door, as I once see a fieldmale myself, for she's a reglar slanderin' old cat, as is always a-gossipin'; and as to the policeman as she see a-goin' in of a evenin', why, he were 'er own brother; and the other parties as come to see 'er, nobody but 'er father and 'er sister's 'usban', so that's wot all the talkin' were about, as do 'ate them scandal mongers myself, as would swear your life away as soon as look at you, and did ought to look at 'ome fust, as I told old Sinful's dorter to 'er face, as was reglar 'umbugged by a master plumber, for tho' he did put up the banns, he never meant to marry 'er, as was old enuf to be 'is mother, and as ugly as sin, with a temper like brimstone, without no treacle to sweeten it; and as to 'er bein' edicated, and talkin' about these spellin' bees, as is all rubbish; and jest like them 'Merrykins, as is that hignorant about English, and calls things by their wrong names, cos wot they means by bees is 'ives; cos it's a lot on 'em all a-gettin' together to work, and gossip, and cut up apples, or 'elp one another, as is naybourly ways, and werry well in a village, tho' there's more scandal-mongerin' than work done; and as to bein' bees, they're a deal more like drones over their work; as can't a-bear gossipin' myself, tho' not afraid about my spellin' as I always were particular over, and got that young man as lodged along with me years ago to give me some lessins in, and teached

me a many things; cos, poor feller, he fretted a deal over not a-payin' that reglar as ho might 'ave done; not as I'd ever got the time for to do the 'ritin' as he set me copies on, for I were 'ard worked with two children on my 'ands, and only let the rooms to ease us with the rent, and 'ad 'ad the bill up many a week when he come to enquire, as were on a Toosday afore twelve o'clock.

I knowed as he was a gentleman the moment I see him, for he was a remarkable nice-lookin' young man, that he certainly was, and I took to 'im the very moment as he pulled the bell, thro' seein' at a glance as hundreds was not to be looked for in 'im.

He was dressed very neat, tho' 'is clothes was old and his boots 'ad a crack in them. And he spoke very pleasant about the rooms, as he said would do very nice, but was afraid of the money, as I asked, bein' twelve shillin's a week; as is nice parlors, and no charge for kitchen fire, nor boots, as is always espected in a reglar way.

He seemed for to be a-thinkin' very much, and at last I says, "If it were likely to be a premmency as I would take ten shillin's for," he did seem to fancy the place so much.

He says "Thank you, very much, but eight is the most as I could afford."

So I says, "You don't espect kitchen fire and boots throwed in for that."

He says "Certingly not."

"Then," I says, "nine must be the money," as at last he agreed to, and when I asked about references, as I'm very particular about, he puts down a sov'rin.

I shakes my head as I says to him, "As gold were precious, but nothing when compared to a lost character, as is a thing to be looked to in lettin'."

He says "I can refer you to where I lodged last year when I was London before."

I says "Where was that?"

"Shepherd's Bush," says he.

I says "It's a day's journey."

"You can write," says he. I didn't say I couldn't, thro' a-knowin' as Brown could.

So I says "If you don't mind callin' agin to-morrow or the day after, I can give a answer."

He says, "I've got nowhere to sleep to-night, and don't want the espence of a hotel."

I says, "If you'll call about seven, I'll see if I can take you in," for really he looked that fagged and wore out, as went to my 'art to turn 'im away, thro' bein' a mother myself. He seemed for to jump at the offer, and said as he'd come, and so he did, poor fellow, and wet to the skin thro' a drivin' rain.

Well, Brown, he said as he thought as there

wasn't no great risk in takiug in a single man as paid heforehand, so I was glad for to be able to tell the young man as he might stop, and had lighted a fire ready for 'im according.

Law hless you, when I come to look at that young man, a-takin' of his tea with a hegg, in a little bit of a light jacket, there wasn't nothing on him no more than a sparrow, as the sayin' is; and I says to him, "A good mutton chop and a pint of stout is more your size, I should say, than tea and a hegg."

He says "As he hadn't much appetite."

"Then," I says, "I 'opes you had a good dinner."

"No," he says, "this is the first thing I've had since a cup of tea aud a roll and hutter in the mornin'."

"Then," I says, "let me get you a-somethiuk for your supper."

He says, "As he couldn't eat nothing more that night," so I takes away his tea things and leaves him.

I don't think as ever I did hear a worse cough than that young man kep up incessant all night, and give me such a turn when I heard Brown say, "If ever I heard a churchyarder, that's one."

In the moruing I says to the young geutlemau, "Your cough is very bad, sir, and did ought to have somethiug done for it."

"Oh," he says, "it's much better than it has

been, and I'm takin' medicine for it, only I've not had time to get it made up."

I says, "You did not ought to neglect that cough, and if you was a son of mine should be in flannel all the winter."

He only give a laugh, and said he'd have a chop for his dinner, as I cooked for him with a hot potato.

He wouldn't have no beer, but asked me to make him some toast and water, as I don't hold with except in fever, as will allay the thirst as soon as anything, for barley water is 'eatin', and lemonade apt for to lower.

If I asked that young man once about 'avin' of his medicine made up, I'm sure I must have done twenty times afore the week was out, but he'd always an answer ready, as he'd been and mislaid the perscription on, or as he'd get it made hisself when he went out, and give me another sov'rin. Meanwhile Brown and me couldn't get no rest for his cough, and I was a-thinkin' serious of givin' him notice for to quit.

One mornin', he didn't get up to his reglar time, as were a little after eight, thro' not bein' one as is early to bed and early to rise, as the sayin' is; and not to be expected, for he set up a-writin' till ever so late, and burnt oil by the pint in no time.

Well, as I was a-sayin' he didn't get up, and

when I went in about ten, for to look to his fire, he called to me in a low, choky voice, and says, "Would you mind a-comin' in here."

I walks in and there he lay like a corpse, as I see in a instant had broke a blood vessel.

I didn't say much to him, and seemin' to make light on it, but as soon as I got out of the room, I sent Mrs. Adams, as used to come in and help me of a mornin', for the doctor, as was very soon on hand.

When he seed him, he says, "Gallopin' consumption," in a whisper to me, "you'd better get rid of him, or send for his friends. I can't do him no good, and I don't see my money, and am too busy to attend him for charity."

I thinks to myself your a brute, but didn't say nothing thro' intendin' for to send for my own doctor.

So off goes my gentleman, as 'll never darken my doors agin no more, I can tell 'im, as 'avc know'd doctors his betters a-ridin' in their carridges, as would pay as much attention to parties as 'adn't a farthin' equal to them as is rollin' in riches, as is what I calls something like a medical man.

I didn't, in course, tell the poor feller what the doctor 'ad said, tho' he questioned me pretty close, and said, "I particular wish to know if I'm very ill?"

I says, "You certainly are ill, but you'll be better in a few days."

He shook 'is 'ead, and said, "No."

I says, "Come, come! you mustn't give way to low sperrits, but take some beef-tea, as I'll bring you, with a bit of dry toast."

He says, "I can't let you do it, for I can't pay you; those two sovereigns was all I 'ad in the world, but was in 'opes to 'ave got more thro' work, the work as I've been at night and day; but now I shan't be able to finish it, so I must go."

"Go!" I says. "Wherever to?"

"I don't know!" he says.

"Where do your friends live?" I asked.

"Friends!" he says; "I've no friends!"

I says, "I can't believe that; as I'm sure you must 'ave 'ad 'em once, and you're not the party to lose 'em; but," I says, "you mustn't talk no more now, but just lay still till your beef-tea is ready, and we'll talk more about your leavin' when my own doctor 'as seen you."

So I made 'im as comfortable as I could without a-gettin' him out of bed, and didn't go back for an 'our or more, in the 'opes as he'd dose off, but listened now and then at the door. It was about one when I gave 'im the beef-tea, as I put out in the cold for to get the fat off more easy when

chilled. He took it very kind, but I see as he 'adn't no fancy for it, so I didn't bother 'im, but waited till Mr. Musgrove 'ad seen 'im, as come in about three.

I do think as he must 'ave been over 'alf an 'our a-examinin' that young man, and when he come out with me, he says, "He must be fed up and took great care on, and may make old bones yet."

He was pretty comfortable in the evenin', and I took my bit of work and set in the front-room, as I might 'ear 'im better with the door open. He'd been up and 'ad 'is bed made, but seemed no wuss for that, and I was in 'opes as he'd dose off, but every time as I give 'im a look in he was awake. It was about ten as I took 'im in some arrer-root as he was to 'ave for 'is supper, as he took with a little brandy in it.

When he says to me, "Mrs. Brown, 'ow much do I owe you?"

I says, "Don't think about that to-night."

He says, "I must, for paid you must be, and the doctor, too."

I says, "No doubt, and shall be when you're better."

"Ah!" he says, "when I'm better; but that won't be for a long time to come."

"Oh!" I says, "you're young, and will soon pick up your strength, so go to sleep now."

"No," he says; "I must write a letter."

I says, "Write a letter to-night! Law a mercy! Why, you'll get your death a-settin' up, tho' a fire in your room."

He says, "I can write what I want without settin' up, if you'll give me my writin'-case."

And so he did, and wrote a short note, as he put in a antelope and give me to post, and wouldn't rest till it was sent, as I got Brown to go with it afore he took his boots off that very night. He was a deal better in the mornin' tho' that weak as he couldn't get up, but I tidied 'im up and got 'im a book, and he seemed all right, but got uncommon restless as the day went on, and kep' a-askin' if nobody 'adn't been or sent for 'im.

So I says, "This 'ere won't do; if you keeps on a-fidgetin' like this you'll be wuss. Now," I says, "keep quiet, that's a good soul, cos," I says, "you're better."

"Ah!" he says, "I shan't trouble you long; I shall soon be dead, but I'm sure they'll pay you."

I says, "I'm glad to hear you talk about bein' dead, cos it proves as you're worth a good many dead ones, for I've nussed a good many, and them as is a-dyin' always thinks as they're a-gettin' well."

He only smiled like, and seemed dosy, so I left

'im; and when I peeped in agin he 'ad dropped into as nice a sleep as ever a infant at the breast do, and were a-breathin' free.

It were jest arter six that a party called and asked for Mr. Austin, as were my lodger's name.

So I says, "He's been dreadful bad, and didn't ought to be disturbed, for the doctor says he's to be kep' quiet."

"Oh," says the party, "I ain't no wish to see 'im, except for 'is own good, but he rote to me about bein' 'ere, and in debt, so I called; not as I've any right to 'elp 'im, as 'ave be'aved werry bad to 'is friends, and is tryin' to run them into law."

I says, "There's nothink wuss than that, for I do believe as Old Nick is the 'ead of the law, and them lawyers is 'is own children."

I see that were a nasty one for 'im, as I give 'im a-purpose, feelin' sure as he was a lawyer; and so he proved, and told me as that young man might 'ave money and everythink else if he'd do the right thing and give up papers as he 'adn't no right to, thro' not bein' born in wedlock.

I says, "I ain't no lawyer, so in course can't say nothink about that, but I can't let you see that young gentleman this evenin' to worret 'im over sich things."

He says, "Oh! werry well then; you can tell 'im as he can 'ave all he wants if he'll sign the paper as is in this letter."

I says, "He shall 'ave it without fail, and I wishes you good evenin' I suppose the young gentleman will know your name?"

He says, "All right about that; good evenin!" and off he walks, and I were glad to see 'is back.

I told that young gentleman when I took 'im up 'is arrer-root, as he'd called, but kep' the letter till the mornin', merely a-sayin' as the party 'ad said as he should 'ear from 'im. I give 'im the letter the next mornin' as were Sunday, and Brown bein' at 'ome, I made 'im go and speak to that poor feller, and tell 'im not to worret over the money; so Brown took and talked to 'im, and 'eard all about 'is troubles, as was all thro' a-losin' of the register of 'is birth; so Brown give 'im some good advice, as seemed for to give 'im fresh 'art, for he took a turn from that day, and tho' it were weeks afore he left the 'ouse, yet were able to get a lawyer as is a 'onest man to go in for 'im, and found 'is certificate, so was able to claim 'is rights, and went for a woyage to New Zeelan' and come back a-weighin' between ten and eleven stun, and is a-doin' well now in the littery line; and it was 'im as give me many a lesson in ritin' and readin', so in course

spellin' come in natral; so that's why I shouldn't feel afraid of not 'oldin' my own agin all the spellin' bees as ever was, as Brown calls a reglar 'um, as won't go down with me.

MRS. BROWN ON SPELLING BEES.

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"WELL," I says to Miss Pilkinton, "'owever you can let yourself down to stand up there like that, and anser them questions, as I see you a-doin' on Toosday night last, and be turned out ingnominee-rous like, I can't think, and jest for spellin' eobbler with two b's, which in course is right, or did ought to be, jest the same as there is a h in sugar nat'rally, only parties drops 'em in a general way; and I'm sure there's many a word as were spelt rong that night as I set a-listenin' to, and couldn't 'ardly keep quiet, as must 'ave up and spoke out but for Mrs. Padwiek a-settin' next me, with 'er roomatics that bad, and Miss Abletts the other side, as keeps a school, with a sick 'eadache, and is that ankshus to show 'er spellin', but went fust to see wot it's like, and that's 'ow I come to go too, cos as to edication, it's too late in the day for me to begin to be learned anythink, tho' I can 'old my own in a general way.

I certingly were glad to go to that spellin' bee, as were close agin Porkman Square, and paid a shillin' to go in, as were crowded, as see a lot of parties all stuck up on a sort of stage, with a party in a chair with 'is back to us, and a-facin' them as was a-goin' to do the spellin', jest like a class, and then there was three parties a-settin' at a table as 'ad got their dixonaries ready. The party as put the questions spoke that short as 'urt Miss Pilkinton's feelin's by turnin' 'er off that platform like a dog for the fust mistake as she made; so I says to 'er when she come down, "If he'd have spoken to me like that, he'd have got 'is answer pretty quick, spellin' bee or no spellin' bee," as didn't say like a gentleman, "I'm sorry, Miss, as you're rong, and there ain't two k's in pickles," as I could 'ave told 'er; but the moment she went rong he 'ollers "Out," and down she come with a run, as the sayin' is, not as I could pity 'er altogether, cos she only went for to crow over Mary Ann Collins, as she said she were sure couldn't spell great A from a chest of drawers, but, as it turned out, spelt quite right and got a prize, as were a book; and to see Miss Pilkinton's temper at that, as was reglar knocked off 'er perch, as the sayin' is, not as Mary Ann even give 'er a look scornful for to 'urt 'er feelin's as she were a-bein' turned out.

So I says to 'er, as she set a-sobbin', "Don't take on so about it, as ain't a 'angin' matter arter

all," for she took it dreadful to 'art, and quite was a-worretin' me when she come and set a-snivellin' behind me, as she said were thro' bein' spoke to that rough by a minister as she looked up to.

I says, "Never mind, let's go 'ome and 'ave supper, as is nearly ten."

So as Mrs. Padwick were willin', and we was near the door, we took and slipped out unawares like, for I wouldn't get up and go out to disturb others for the world, tho' I did drop my umbreller and some coppers in goin' out at the door.

So arter supper Miss Pilkinton were werry down about hignorance a-carryin' the day, a-feelin' hurt over 'er extra k. So I says, "I've 'eard say as ignorance is bliss and as it's folly to be wise."

She says, "That's your ways, as I do believe glories in knowin' nothink."

I says, "Escuse me, but I only wish as I could act up to all as I knows; but," I says, "I'll go to a spellin' bee myself with you any time, and if I don't set some on 'em right I'll know the reason why."

Miss Abletts she were a-stoppin' along with me thro' 'avin' give up 'er school, as she did used once to 'ave a good many pupils, and a lot more in 'er eye, when them School Board parties with their edication took and ruined 'er; she didn't care much about it, for she 'ad about a pound a week from a aunt to live on, and bein' constant confined in that

school-room were gettin' too much for 'er, so she broke it up and come to me while lookin' about for a couple of rooms; for she's a lovely 'and at lace-mendin', as puts a pretty penny in 'er pocket, tho' she can't set at it constant, and I was glad to 'ave 'er with me, as Brown were away a good deal, and liked to 'ave a talk with 'er of a evenin' when at 'ome, and that's 'ow I picked up a deal, cos Brown he's a reader as well as a freethinker, but yet don't never give 'is opinion over things as he don't understand, as shows 'is sense, not like that party as 'ave been makin' a fool of 'isself a-sayin' as there ain't no sich a person as the devil, and as Brown says, 'owever he's a-goin' to prove 'is words he should like to know, as might turn up on 'im some day, like Mrs. Truelin's 'usban', as nobody not in all the street didn't never believe as she'd ever 'ad one, and 'ome the man come from sca all of a sudden, as 'ad been away thirty year, and she never give 'im up, but stopped a widder all them years for 'is sake; so that there Mr. Jinkins 'ad better take warnin' by Punch and Judy, for fear as Old Nick should come up suddin at the end for to claim 'im, jest as he's a-thinkin' he's got off Scotch free, as the sayin' is.

But, law bless me, wotever is spellin' and readin' arter all, compared with doin' of your duty; and as to 'istory, I do think it's a shame to give it young people to read, for it's nothink but a bad

example for 'em, cos jest look at our kings and queens, a nice lot of downright blackguards as they used to be, and if it wasn't for Queen Wictorier a-comin' along, as we all knows to be that good, why, we should say as the sooner they was done away with the better; not but wot bad as they are, they're better than them as 'ave put 'em down, like the French riverlution, as 'ave brought a cuss on the country, I do believe; cos I've been a-takin' in 'istory in parts with picters, and I'm sure it gives me the creeps to think 'ow bad parties can be'ave, and all for wot, jest to get a crown on their 'eads, as they can't get a night's rest for the trouble on, a-murderin' and a-pisonin' one another, or else a-lyin' and a-cheatin' till they're black in the face; cos they did used once to 'ave a good stand-up fight over it; but not a-likin' that, they got over one another with lyin' and cheatin', and false swearin', for, as I were a-sayin' to Miss Abletts, "Why, look at 'em from the fust, for as to William the Conkerer, as they calls 'im, I don't think much of 'im, as wasn't nothink to Dutch Sam for a Conkerer, as were Champion of Ingland to the day of 'is death, and if you come to that so was Deaf Burke, as is wot I calls bravery, to stand up in nothink but your trousers and your double fistes, and be a-'ammered at like a blacksmith; but when you're all done up like in iron the same as the Tower of London, and nothink but

bows and arrers to shoot at you with, why, any one might be a conkercr, as could set on is orse long enuf; but I should like to see one on 'em blowed like a bubble from the cannon's mouth, and then see wot good their armer would be. Cos in course it weren't a fair fight with them Brittins as 'adn't nothin' on, as in course a harrer would be werry irritatin' to, even in runnin' away, so I don't think as that William 'ad much to boast on, as were a reg'lar bully, and not much better than a savidge in 'is ways; and I've seen that part of France as he come from, as is called Ruen to this werry day, all along of 'is ways, as ruined heverything and heveryone as he come near, but come 'ome to 'im at last, thro' a-puttin' 'is foot in 'ot hashes, as made 'is 'orse pummel 'im to death, as wouldn't never 'ave 'appened if he 'adn't took and burnt that their town, a willin as were a bad lot from the beginnin', mother and all; not but wot it's true, as the sayin' is, give a dog a bad name, and preaps that's 'ow it were with 'er, as wasn't 'er fault, cos in course she didn't name 'erself jest the same as she didn't make herself, as the sayin' is. Then that conkerer's son, William Rufus, I'm sure it were out of the frying'-pan into the fire, as tho sayin' is, for when that there Rufus come to be king, he natrally didn't like to be grigged over 'is 'air; not but wot I've knowed red-'aired parties as was werry good- look

iu', and reg'lar lambs in temper, tho' preaps a little peppery, as I don't consider a bad temper myself, and couldn't live with a angel as sulked. But this ere Rufus he were a conkerer, as the book says, was a-goin' to turu Jew, and wouldn't never marry, so in course never 'ad no royal family, and got shot off 'is 'orse like rubbish as he was, from behind a tree, a-goiu' a-'untin' in that New Forest, as in course thro' bein' new the trees 'adn't growed up, so wasn't thick enuf to pertect 'im with their truuks; aud nobody wasn't sorry for 'im, as were berried like a dog, as were a untimely hend, tho' some say as 'is brother as come arter 'im 'ad a 'and iu it, thro' bein' 'untin' together, and bolted 'omo in a 'urry, aud collared the crown, as were called 'Enery the Fust, but must 'ave been a cold-blooded wretch for to take and shet 'is brother up for life, jest cos he were the eldest, as I can't abear to see them bullyin' ways in families; as is jest like them Costermans, as was always a-fightin' for the fust pull at the pot of porter over their Sunday dinner, and would blow the 'ead off into oue another's faces, as aint wot I calls manners; and 'ad 'is son drowned at sea, as never smiled agin, but took to eatin' till he bust, as is the way as grief will take some parties as don't let it 'ave free went in tears, as is a safety-walve for your feeliu s; but he took it to 'art, and only left a dorter behind, as never come to be queen

thro' a party in the name of Stephens a-collarin' the crown; but he never throve on it, for what with fightin' and squabblin', he 'adn't no time on it, and then 'is son took and died, as he didn't outlive 'im long; and then there come another 'Enery, as were a werry so-so character, and not a good 'usban', and be'aved shameful to Fair Rosoman, as lived like a butterfly born in a bower as nobody couldn't get in, jest like the maze at 'Ampton Court, as I were in for 'ours once; but love will find out the way, as the sayin' is, and so that there Queen she got 'old of a clue, and jest walked into that there young fieldmale's affections, as the sayin' is, with a pisoned bowl, as she made 'er swaller with the dagger's pint at 'er throat; as in course brought on words atween that king and quecn, as never did get on very well togcther; and then the sons sided with the mother, as is in gen'ral the case with a family row, and altogether they managed for to worrit the king to death, as left 'is crown to 'is son, as were called Richard Cured the Lion, thro' 'im 'avin' took a thorn out of a lion's foot as he met a-limpin' about in a wood one day with a thorn in it, as were that grateful as he would tear 'im to bits when a-meetin' of 'im arterwards over in the 'Oly Land, in the sandy desert as he was a-goin' across to Jerusilem, as he was a-goin' to drive them Turks out on, as is siugler when you comes to think 'ow times is changed now-a-days, when they've

been a-makin' such a fuss as they did over that there Shar and that Sultan, as aint no better than Turks; but then we 'aven't got Jerusilem for to quarrel over like them Croosaders, as they called 'em, as was werry brave, but 'ad to give it up thro' the 'eat bein' that tremenjous as it reglar dried 'em up, and then arter all that King Richard, as were not the 'ump-backed gent as smothered the babes in the wood, but got 'isself killed with a harrer over a wall as he were a-tryin' for to get into a man's 'ouse as 'ad got 'old of a treasure as that king wanted, but got it 'ot 'imself instead, and serve 'im right too, for I can't abear sich graspin' ways myself, as is mean, partikler in a king. But of all the waggerbones as ever did come to rain over us it were that there John, as there never wasn't but one, and that's a mussy, for he were a reglar bad egg, as the sayin' is, and were a bad son to 'is father, and be'aved bad to 'is ma and also to 'is brother, and quarrelled with the Pope, and kicked up old 'Arry's delights all over the place, but 'ad to knock under afore they would give 'im Christun berryin', as signed a Charter like my own god-father as were captain of a ship, as he didn't stick to, and come to an untimely end over peaches and new ale, as is things as I'm sure would disagree with me, partikler in warm weather; but 'ad a son as come arter 'im in the name of 'Enery the Third, as were only a child, and that's 'ow it were as he come to live

to be a werry old man like George the Third, as died mad as a 'atter, poor old man," as the sayin' is; as is as fur as I've got, but am a-goin' on readin' steady to the end, for all Miss Pilkinton's jeers, as dropped in while me and Miss Ableths was a-talkin', and she meant 'er nasty sneers the moment as I see 'er red-tipped nose come in at the door, as give a short larf, and says, "'Istory, indeed! Oh, 'ow learned we're a-gettin'!"

Says Miss Ableths, "Mrs. Brown 'ave a wonderful memory, and knows them early kings like a book."

"Oh, indeed!" says Miss Pilkinton, "but I dare say couldn't tell who come 'ere fust."

"Why," I says, "the Romins."

She give a toss of 'er 'ead, a-sayin' "I know as she'd never 'eard who was the Anshent Brittins."

I says, "Not know who was the Anshent Brittins! Why," I says, "the Anshent Brittins was parties to be sure, as lived on acorns in the 'oles and corners, and didn't wear no clothes, but clubs and spears."

As is wot I don't believe, and don't stand to reason as they go without clothes, but quite the rewerse, in a climit like this; as if any one would go about sich weather as we 'ave 'ad with no clothes on! It's rubbish, for I'm sure, for my part, I'd rather berry myself up to my neck in the earth alive; and then for parties to say as they coloured

theirselves blue, as proves they 'ad elothes, and linen too, for ain't the blue-bag a thing as is used still in washin', even in Queen Wictorier's own laundry? and a deal too much on it sometimes, as were Mrs. Jenkins' fault in getting up fine things, as I'm sure weren't no Anshent Brittin, for she come from Wales, and remembered 'er own grandmother as wore a man's 'at, and couldn't speak no English, and that's the reason, in my opinion, as Mrs. Jenkins 'erself stutters and splutters in speakin', tho' 'er maiden name were Watkins, as she do say were kings of Wales afore the Prince of Wales come in to it, as he did a infant in arms, and were wot I calls a mean dodge for that king, 'is father, to try on them poor hignorant Welshers, as 'they treats shameful to this day down at the raees, to punish 'em for bettin', for I see one myself 'arf killed at the Darbey, with 'is clothes tore off 'is back, as they said 'ad been a-cheatin' as means bettin' when he 'adn't got no money to pay his losses; and they did ought to do the same by parties as carries on that game in the City, for there'd be a nice show of rags all over the place, if they was to serve out all them like that as goes into busyness for to make all they can, with no money to pay with when they loses.

But as I were a-sayin' them Anshent Brittins was no doubt werry good sort of folks, werry much like wot farmers is now-a-days, as minds their own

busyness, and takes things quiet, and 'ad their religion, as was the Anshent Order of Druids, as Joe Barus belougs to to this werry day, and goes about once a-year dressed up like one on 'em, as is a sober lot in the general way, tho' preaps a glass too much when their anniwersary comes round, as is their own enemies; and I don't see what call them Romins 'ad to burn 'em all cos they kep up the independence of them Brittins, as is wot I've 'eard some say did ought to be done with the priests in Ireland, and wot they did try to do more than once; but it didn't wash, as the sayin' is, so now they lets 'em alone, as is the best way, cos you may lead the Irish, but you can't never drive 'em any more than the Brittins; as never, never, never shall be slaves, as the sayin' is, tho' I'm sure as some on 'em is slaves enuf for anythink; as I always says about them cricket-matches and boat races, I'm sure as no slaves in this world wouldn't never be made to do it; and for my part, I wouldn't ride a race, nor yet go a-'untin', not if anyone was to go down on their bended knees and offer me all them crown jewels as is in the Tower, as they do say Jane Shore didn't want to accept, and then, poor thing, to be drove to beg 'er bread from door to door, and die in a ditch arter all; but in course, if she never were the king's lawful wife, why, she must espect wot she got, as

didn't ought to 'ave left 'er 'usband, tho' he was only a silversmith, but then them kings was always a rowdy lot, and that's why the Merrykins don't 'old with them; but, law, it's all rubbish, and only a name arter all, cos there must be a 'ead, and it don't matter wot you calls 'em. And some of these days them Merrykins will ketch a Tartar, as the sayin' is, as 'll make 'em wish as they'd got Queen Wictorier long to reign over 'em, tho' she do live over in Scotland, as is too much the lady for to interfere in anybody else's busyness, but always minds 'er own, as is wot kings and queens did ought to.

But, law bless me, I'm sure now-a-days kings and queens and all the royal families must be reglar puzzled to death wot to do or wot to say, cos if they opens their mouths there's parties ready to ketch at their words like a cock at a gooseberry, as the sayin' is; and then one thinks one thing, and another another, and 'rites to the "Times," or ask a question in Parlyment, as did used to make that old winegar-visage Gladstin werry wild of a night to 'ave some fool a-askin' 'ow that there Sultan is to pay 'is espenses if he ain't got no money, as is 'is busyness, and let them as thinks he did ought to be trusted keep on a payin' for ever till he gets to rights again, and then in course he'll pay 'em back quite ouerable, if he 'ave to pull them dimons out of 'is

turbin, and sell all them wives; cos in course he don't care for 'em, but only wants 'em to show 'is principles, so sticks to 'em the same as I would 'ave that there tea-tray as poor Mrs. Bodkin give me in 'er last illness, because I'd said as she'd give it me, and wouldn't go back from my word, as wouldn't 'ave took a crumb as didn't belong to me; but as I says, principles is everythink, whether that tray were a iron japan or a pappyer mashee. So they give me the iron one, as were a reglar wreck, with spots of rust all over it as big as arf-a-crown; but I didn't mind, cos I says it's not the walue, but my rights.

Not but wot if I was king I'd be king of Roosher, and rain over them Turks, and make 'em do as I told 'em, and pretty sharp, too; and it's lucky as Queen Wictorier that time as she went over to see that there Bethnal Green Park come 'ome by the Tems Embankment, for they did not want 'er to pass thro' Temple Bar, so as to see all that waste ground, and them Law Courts not begun; but when she did 'ear as they 'adn't begun 'em, she sent for the builders and give 'em a wiggin' as made 'em shake in their shoes, and serve 'em right, as set to work the werry next day, for they know'd as she'd take and sack the lot, and give it that Lord Chancery 'ot, too.

Cos in course in old times we all knows as anythink in Chancery lasted all your life, and never

come to your children, nor yet your lawful airs, till they was all dead and berried, and then the Lord Chancery he took and locked 'em up along with 'is other suits, as they calls 'em, till they was all forgot and rotted away.

As is why I can't a-bear them 'ordin' ways, and I remembers when old Miss Bulteel died, as were Lady Wittles' aunt, there was new things as 'ad been put away over fifty years, all worn out in the folds, and the moth a reg'lar cloud.

But it's all rubbish about these ere new Lord Chanceries a-sayin' as they'll look into things, cos there's sich a mask of things as they can't get to the bottom on, and the best thing would be a fire, as is, arter all, sometimes a blessin', as I'm sure it were at old Pelter's, as kep a marine store shop, and would 'ave bred a pestilence if he 'adn't been burnt thro' the snuff of a candle a-droppin' on 'is bed, as is bones and old rags a-burnin', was smelt as far as the Tower Amlets, and would 'ave ended in a fiery grave 'isself, but for the firemen pickin' 'im up, and a-throwin' 'im into the back yard, a-thinkin' he was a bundle of somethink, as they fell over in breakin' into the back premises.

So that's why I said as I would put down all as I knows about 'istory and Anshent Brittins, as might be a satisfaction to Brown for to look over when I'm gone, and be able to contradict them

reports about me a-bein' that hignorant, but never meant as that young rascal of a boy of Mrs. Micklin's should go a-rummagin' about in my back parlour drawers, and let others read 'em, and that's 'ow it were as it come to light thro' 'im bein' left alone that Sunday arternoon with Barnes's boy, as always gets into mischief over their colicks, as he'd been turned back in twice, at the Sunday school, so wanted to say it afore evenin' church, as they was all a-goin' to 'ave a treat the next Toosday, as ain't wot I calls true religion, a-goin' out in a wan, but does 'em good; and as to Sunday school, I don't 'old with it, for more than 'arf a 'our or so in the morniu', jest to pint out the right way, as is werry confusin' now-a-days, when some says there ain't no right way, but as we're all a-gropin' about in the dark, and can't none on us be sure as we're a-goin' right, as is not my ways; cos you might jest as well be a Socialist at once, and rob and murder everybody.

Tho' we all knows as the wicked do prosper in this world, but that don't prove as they won't ketch it some day when they least espects it; as'll be the way with that feller Old Confield, as cheated me out of my bit of property, as he pretended he were a-goin' to 'elp me get, and then let me into a 'ole, as the sayin' is; but never mind, he may 'old is 'ead werry 'igh, a drivin' along in 'is tea cart

and a-goin' out a-plcasurin' Sundays, and leavin' of 'is poor wife alone, and it's a mussy there's no family, cos I'm sure there ain't no more of that breed wanted, as is a ugly lot and brimstone tempers, but all my own fault, thro' not of 'avin' it down in black and white, for tho' the man as'll break 'is word would break 'is hoath, yet there 'ave been somethink to show; but he's a swindler, so let him slide, as the Yankees say, as'll come to the dunghill now afore he dies, with all 'is bounce and lies about 'is property, as everybody 'ates, tho' in course there's a lot as toadies 'im for wot they can get out of 'im; and calls 'im all the snobs as they can lay their tungs to behind 'is back, and when they gets a chance will 'ave their knives into 'im pretty sharp, I know. Not as I means to speak agin edication nor yet religion, tho' I don't consider as a mishunary a-comin' to tea with your servint three times a week when your back's turned, ain't proper ways, cos I'm sure he never got no incouragement from me, not from the werry fust, as couldn't abear the sight on 'im, that time as he come to the door as I opened myself, thro' bein' that busy as I didn't know 'ow to turn, with a reglar clean up, for I was quite took up with the sweeps and the whitewashers, and tho stair carpets up, and the gal up to 'er eyes in the back washus.

He looked a reglar sneak, as says, with a smile, "Mrs. Brown, I've 'eard a deal of you thro' parties as respects you, as were my fust wife's niece, Liza Pinfold, as lived with you."

I says, "Wot's become of 'er?"

He says, "Oh, she've emigrated 'appy, as we 'eard on 'er last week, so thought as I'd call for to inquire for your welfare."

I says, "I'm much obliged, but thro' bein' that busy as I must ask you to come agin when not up to my eyes in cleanin, as ain't got a chair for to set on."

"Oh," he says, "it's all the same. I can talk to you while you work."

"No," I says, "thank you, I'm too busy."

"Ah, but not too busy with washin', I 'opes, not to give a thought to your soul."

I says, "Bless the man, there's a time for all things, and tho' I opes never to forget my soul, I must put my clean curtings up, so I wish you good-day," and opens the door and shows him out.

He says, "I'll call agin."

I says, "By all means," tho' I didn't fancy 'im.

I did used to be a deal with Mrs. Padwick that winter, thro' Brown bein' away from 'ome constant, and 'er roomatics a-confinin' 'er to 'er room for weeks together, tho' 'er gineral health were excellent, as they says in the papers about the Prince of

Wales, as must be as strong as a 'orse to go thro' wot he does and 'ave done over in Injier.

But as I were a-sayin', I see as that gal as lived along with me were werry much down on 'er luck, and asked me to let 'er 'ave 'er wages in advance, and certingly the bread and butter went like steam, and I smelt cookin' once or twice of a arternoon when I come in all of a 'urry, but thought as preaps she'd got a bloater with 'er tea, so didn't take no notice, cos I don't like to pry into wot a servint eats, nor yet drinks neither, and didn't begrudge 'er a extra 'aporth of milk, tho' did say to 'er, "Susan, you eats a lot of butter with your tea;" and that's 'ow it were I found it all out, thro' a-goin' into Mr. Clarkson's, the butterman's, for to order a fowl and fresh butter for Mrs. Padwick, when he says to me, "Mrs. Brown, mum, I don't think as your servint is a-goin' on quite on the square."

I says, "Law, wotever do you mean?"

"Why," he says, "she's run up a bill for butter, eggs, and bacon as is five shillin's over and above wot you've 'ad, and promised she'd pay me when she got 'er wages."

I says, "Why, she's 'ad a 'ole quarter in advance."

"Well," he says, "and more than that, my young man tells me as she do 'ave a party to tea with 'er frequent, as she denies to 'im, thro' 'im bein'

sweet'art of 'er, as she've been and cold-shouldered, as in course put the young man's monkey up, as the sayin' as, and he took and found as the party as 'ad cut 'im out were a Reverend Noggins, and belonged to the fresh Baptist Connexion, and were a married man, and lived out by 'Ackney Wick, as Mr. Clarkson didn't consider it were proper for that gal to 'ave to tea that frequent; besides, he felt 'urt over 'is young man, as were serous disposed, and went to the same chapel with our gal, as Mr. Clarkson 'isself preached at, but 'ad been that disgusted as he'd been and cut 'is chapel and took to music 'alls, a-feelin' as he'd been treated shameful by that young 'ooman for this 'ere fresh sweet'art, as is disgraceful in a minister.

I didn't say much, but told 'im not to trust 'er no more, and be sure not to say as he'd told me anythink. I see as that gal were always werry 'andy in gettin' me my things ready to go out, so made up my mind as I'd watch 'er, and so I did, thro' a-goin' out one arternoon, and then a-steppin' in to Miss Cobbins, as is two doors off, with a bow winder, so could command a view of my 'ouse. I set at 'er winder a-chattin' with 'er, and sure enuf, about four o'clock, I see my gentleman, as were my mishunary, walk into my front gardin' and go in at the kitchen door.

I goes to Mr. Clarkson's, and gets 'im to send

'is young man to take me in his cart to see Mrs. Noggins, as wasu't more than ten minnit's drive. I never see a more forbidden-lookin' old fieldmale than she were, as come to the door 'erself, and a 'ouse that neat and cold-lookiu' as turned you dull.

I says, "Is Mr. Noggins at 'ome?"

She says, "No, and won't be till late, thro' bein gone over the water for sperritial work."

"Ah!" I says, "then he can't be the party as I wants, as is a pale face, and weak knees, with a squint."

She says, "My revcred 'usbin 'ave a slight cast in 'is eye, and is pallid."

"Well," I says, "the party as I meaus, as I 'ave becu told as 'is name is Noggins, is a-drinkin' tea in the Bow Road, aloug with my servint, and that's why I come to kuow if he were at 'ome, as didn't believe as a rcspectable minister would be a-goin' on like that."

She says "Oh! eertingly uot."

I says, "It's easy settled, cos he's there that frequeut, that you must know whether he's out or at homc three nights a weck."

She says, "He's out, but always at sperritia work."

I see as she looked uneasy like. So I says, "You're welcome to come and see."

Mr. Clarksou's young man he get out of the

cart, and tied the 'oss to a lamp post; so I beckons 'im and says, "Is this good lady's 'usbin the party you were a-speakin' to me about;" for he'd told me a-comin' aloug, as he knowed 'er well by sight thro' seein' 'er along with Noggins at Moody and Sankey's.

"Yes," says he, "it's 'im sure enuf, mum."

"Oh!" she says, "wot slanderin' lies parties will tell; why," she says, "he's miles off."

"No," I says, "he ain't, if he's in my kitchen, for that ain't more than a mile."

"I'll make you prove your words," says she.

"I'll do so," says I, "if you'll come with us."

She says, "I'm afraid of the cart, but can get a cab."

"I'll fetch you one," says the young man, and off he went like a shot.

She says to me, "Step in while I put my bonnet on, and mind if your rong, you'll pay my cab fare there and back."

I says, "I will."

So 'er and me went iu the cab to the corner of our street, and Clarkson's youug man went his own way, as 'ad things to deliver down 'Ackney. When we got out of the cab it were quite dark, I see by the firelight as flickered on the kitchen blind as they 'adn't lit the gas. So I told Mrs. Noggins to

stand jest inside the passage at the front door; and told 'er as I'd go in at the kitchen entrance.

She says, "Can't he get out at the back."

I says, "No, cos a-leavin' the gal alone in the 'ouse, I always locks it all up afore leavin' 'ome, and 'ides the keys, and there's iron bars at all the winders."

So down I goes to the kitchen door, and gives a rap as there wasn't no anser to at fust, but when I knocked agin, I 'eard a scuffle like, and then that gal says, "Who's there?"

I says, "Me, in course; open the door," as she did, and in I walks, and there was the tea things not cleared away, as two 'ad been a-'avin' with eggs and bacon, and shrimps, and creases.

So I says, "You've 'ad company, Susan."

She says, "Only my mother."

"Oh!" I says, "indeed." I looks round, and didn't see no signs of any one bein' in the kitchen; so I says, "Is she gone?"

"Yes," says she.

I says, "She left 'er umbreller," and up I takes one as were standin' by the dresser.

She give a start, and says. "Oh! so she 'ave; I'll take it to 'er to night, if you please, cos she's got to go out to-morrer early, that is if you can spare me now, as you're come 'ome."

"Well," I says, "get me some tea, and then you can go." I says, "I'll 'ave it 'ere."

"Oh!" she says, "the chimbley's been a-smokin' dreadful; you'd better 'ave it upstairs."

"Well," I says, "I do smell smoke; but it's baccy."

She says, "Mr. Brown were a-smokin' 'ere."

"Yes," I says, "last week."

So I set down, and she says, "Law, mum, the table's such a muddle. I'd rather give it you comfortable upstairs."

I says, "I'll 'ave it 'ere, and so will the lady as is come 'ome with me, as is in the passage; so," I says, "light the gas in the 'all, and ask 'er to walk down."

She didn't say nothink, but did as I told 'er, tho' she turned werry white. I was pretty sure as that feller were a-'idin' in the back washus, cos there wasn't no cupboard as he could get into in the front kitchen; so when she'd gone upstairs I lights a gas, and down I sets, and 'eard a short corf in that washus as the kitchen opens into; and jest then Mrs. Noggins and that gal come down.

I says, "Susan, go and fetch a policeman, for," I says, "I'm sure there's a man a-'idin' somewheres; I 'eard 'im corf."

She says, "Law, mum, it's only the wind, as

often sounds like a corf down that back kitchen flue."

I says, "Go for the police." I says, "Don't be afeard, Mrs. Noggins," and I steps up to the washus door and locks it. Jest then I 'eard a crash of glass a-breakin', and knowed he were a-tryin' to get out at the back winder, as was all bars.

"Oh!" says the gal, a-fallin' on 'er knees, "pray forgive me; but it's my young man as I've 'ad to tea without a-askin' you, as is 'ighly respectable."

I says, "That's all right; but why try to 'ide 'im?"

She says, "He's that shy he can't bear no strangers."

I says, "There's no strangers 'ere," so I opens the door and says, "pray, walk in 'ere, Mr. Noggins."

The gal says, "'Is name is Triffle, not Noggins."

I says, "That's all right, then he ain't this good lady's 'usban'."

The gal give a toss of 'er 'ead, and says, "'Is grandmother"; and she says, "Come out, Samuel, and show yourself, for you ain't done nothink to be ashamed on." But out he wouldn't come; and poor Mrs. Noggins were a-settin' in a chair all of a tremblo, and says, "I knowed it weren't my Ebenezer."

I says, "Come out, whoever you are, or I'll fetch you out pretty quick," and out crawled that feller as I'd know'd 'ad called on me when I was a-cleanin', as in my opinion was only a blind, and meant to see that fool of a gal, as give a scream, and flew at 'im, and reglar pitched into 'im; while Mrs. Noggins, she jumped up as soon as ever she see 'im, and clawed at 'is face, and pulled 'is 'air, and 'it 'im with all 'er might, and were quite out of breath when I took and forced 'er back in the chair, and ordered the gal to leave 'im alone.

She says, "Let me get at 'im. I'll 'ave 'is wile life!"

"Do so," says Mrs. Noggins; "and I'll thank you."

He began a-wimperin' and a sayin' to me, "Keep 'er off; she's a reglar tiger, as beats and 'arf starves me at 'ome, and I'm glad to get a meal wittles anywheres; and I'm sure this young ooman ain't 'eard nothink but good from me."

The gal were a-cryin' fit to break 'er 'art, and a-sayin' as he never weren't no sweet'art of 'ern, only she wanted to get a gold watch and chain at a spellin' bee, and as he'd offered for to teach 'er 'ow to spell; and as to love, it were words as 'ad never crossed 'is lips, only she wanted to get rid of that butterman, with 'is red whiskers, so choked 'im off with the mishunary.

"Well," I says, "there ain't never no good comes of under'and ways, cos if you'd spoke out proper you could 'ave got rid of the butterman, and I'd 'ave teached you spellin' myself, as always were a good 'and at that."

Up jumps that Mrs. Noggins, and says, "If you're spellin's like your talkin', you'll get all the prizes."

No sooner 'ad she moved out of 'er chair than that poor creetur of a 'usban' of 'ern, as 'ad got 'is 'at and umbreller, made a bolt for it thro' the kitchen door afore she could stop 'im. Then she took and turned on me, a-sayin' as I'd been and blackened 'is character.

I says, "Me! Why, I only come and told you, cos I didn't consider it were right in 'im a-comin' 'ere on the sly, while you thought it were all 'is sperritial dooties as took 'im from 'ome; but," I says, "he's young, and if you wants to keep 'im at 'ome, give 'im 'is full meals reglar and plentiful, and make 'im comfortable, and he'll stop with you, for I'm sure he was as thin as a barber's cat."

She didn't stop to 'ear me out, but walks away without even so much as a bend in partin', as ain't the lady, in my opinion. As to that gal, I sent 'er to 'er mother the werry next day, and locked the 'ouse up thro' a-goin' to stop for a week with Mrs. Padwick, as can't even feed 'erself with her room-

attics a-settlin' in 'er jintes. I did 'ear of them Noggins' agin, as never weren't friends no more, and she give 'im at last a trifle a week to keep away from 'er; and he 'ave give up the chapel, and a-took to bein' tied with ropes in the streets, I 'ear, cos he were a reglar duffer at spellin', and were turned out of all them bees, as couldn't spell treekle, and such easy words as that. So I ain't been able to go to no more spells thro' Mrs. Pad wick bein' that bad; but when she've turned the corner me and Miss Pilkinton will go, for she's at 'er dixonary morn, noon, and night, and says, means to carry all afore 'er next time as she mounts the platform. As to me, I don't believe in no dixonaries, but spells all thro' noosepapers, as is sure to be right. I tries my spellin' over nearly every night when I gets to bed, but the wust on it is as I falls asleep over the 'ard words. But I don't think as it's spellin' as parties wants, and larnin', so much as manners, partickler them Commons, as took and shoved old Dizzy slap out of the 'Ouse as he were a-tryin' to get in and speak to the Queen on 'er werry throne, as preaps jest remembered as he'd been and spelt somethink rong in 'er royal speech as she'd give 'im a warmin' for; any'ow, ho were put out, and took and walked off in a huff, a-feelin' 'urt, no doubt. But as I were a-sayin' to a lady as I were settin' next in a penny bus from

the Surcas to Cherrin' Cross, whyever they lets them Common fellers come near Queen Wictorier I cannot think, as might use low langwidge or get a-shyin' things, the same as Trafalgar Square, as is a reglar mob, and not fit for no lady in this world to mix with, partikler a Queen on 'er royal throne, as I'm sure did ought to be purtected in openin' of 'er Parlymint from them Commons, as ain't nothink to 'er; and I'm sure as she don't want none of their impidence."

Says a wild-lookin' waggerbone near me, "Ah! she can't do without us, as 'olds the puss-strings, and can cut off the supplies."

I says, "Wot of, gas and water?"

"No," he says, "the money."

I says, "Rubbish! my good feller, fancy Queen Wictorier wantin' money; why, if she was to put a adwertisement in the 'Times,' merely a-sayin' as she were a little short, why, she'd 'ave millions in a minnit without no lone societies a-plunderin' on 'er like a many poor widders, as wants to buy a mangle for to support the family, and gets nicely mangled theirselves."

"Ah!" says the lady, "not but wot them deservin' objects is often big thieves, like a party in the name of Mrs. Plumit, as I were a security for a sowin' machecn, as bested both mo and the party as let 'er 'ave it, and were found layin' across

it dead drunk, with 'er 'air all tangled and tore out by roots in the machenery."

"Ah!" I says, "that is 'ard, that is, but it's a cold, 'ard world."

"It ain't the world," says the lady, "but the people as is in it."

I didn't say nothink, cos I knowed she were a fool, cos whoever means to find fault with the world, as is only sea and land, as don't do no harm to nobody, not but wot shipwrecks and them railway axidents is dreadful things by sea and by land too.

Says the wild-looking man as were a-sittin' oppersite me, "You seem to know a deal, old lady, and wot's more, you ain't greedy, a-keepin' all of it to yourself, like some."

I says, "It's werry rude to call any one old, specially a lady, not as I'm ashamed of my age, as am four years older than Queen Wictorier 'erself, to a 'our; though none of my children didn't marry any more than me so young as 'er; but as to knowin' things, why I've forgot a deal more than others, as shall be nameless, ever knowed; tho' not a-wantin' to look down upon them others as, tho' ugly, didn't make theirselves, tho' in course that ain't no escuse for lyin' and cheatin' as is 'ow I come not to 'ave a orgin of my own, tho' I'd scorn to set upon a poor orgin man, as is that dotin' fond of music, poor things, jest like all forriners, as I see

one on 'em myself only last week, a-standin' ankle deep in all that slush and muck, as is a disgrace to the parish, a-playin' of 'is orgin and a-smilin' that 'appy, so goes to the gate to give 'im a penny, when out rushed that scurvy-faced old Sinful, as in my opinion is a reglar cad, and no better than he did ought to be, a-sayin' as he couldn't do is work in that noise.

I says, "Don't address none of your remarks to me," I says, "as I considers did ought to be in the 'ulks with your betters."

So 'is dorter she come to the door, a-screamin' out as her par couldn't do 'is ritin' for that orgin.

I says, "So much the better for them as 'as to read it, as in my opinion ain't no better than a beggin' impostor, as is always a-cadgin' and a-stealin' "

So I goes in and shets the door, not as I 'olds with them orgins three at a time, back, and front, and down the side street, as is confusin' to the 'ead, no doubt; but old Sinful is sich a brute, and 'ated by every one of the naybours, that I'd take the part of anythink agin 'im; and 'ave a good mind to 'ave that Germin boy band to play in my front gardin jest to aggrawate 'im.

But when Brown come in to supper that evenin' and said as Disreely'd been and got 'isself into a

'ole in byin' up all them Sewers Canals over in Egyp, I says, "Wotever is the use on it?"

Says Brown, "Why, it's our way to Injier."

"Law," I says, "wot, thro' the Sewers, as is jest like the underground railway, as never could be bore all the way to Injier, leastways, not if it was as bad as the Baker Street station, as chokes me every time as I goes down it."

Says Brown, "Don't you see as we shall be able for to keep it all to ourselves and keep other nations out on it?"

"But," I says, "mussy on us! if they brings it over 'ere, why, wherever shall we put it, as is overflowin' now ourselves, tho' I 'ave 'eard say as it's a fine thing throwed over the fields, tho' not that sweet for to breathe as wiolits."

Brown he were a-readin', and didn't make no answer.

I says, "Do you mean to say as there's a-goin' to be a underground canal all the way to Injier?"

Brown only says, "Oh, bother! let me read in peace."

I says, "Oh, certingly; and while you're about it I should like to 'ear about 'ow the Prince of Wales is a-goin' on, for I don't like 'im a-goin' and a-dinin' along with them wild beasts, as I don't couider helefants no better, and wouldn't go into a cave full on 'em not for the best dinner as was ever

put on a table, with the largest rifles as ever was loaded in my 'ands all the time, as, tho' good, might have flashed in the pan, and then where'd the Prince 'ave been? tho' in course he is a crack shot, like 'is father afore 'im; tho' I'm glad to hear as he's cool, for I knowed a party once myself as was out in Injier for years as told me you couldn't bear a blanket over you not at Christmas time, let alone a helefant, as 'is trunk alone would be too much of a weight on you."

I'm sure it give me quite a turn when Brown begun a-readin' about that there wessel as were recked close agin Dover, as seems wuss than that one off 'Arrich, as is a place I've been to myself, and I'm sure nobody wouldn't never care to go there cscept in distress of weather, when they couldn't get nowheres else; but as to them as lives there a-seein' signals of distress all that time, and only standin' a-starin' at them rockets as if they was fireworks, why, it don't say much for their pluck nor yet their 'arts, as seems to be only lockin' arter wot they can get out of recks.

But, law bless me, I suppose they're so used to sich things as they don't pay 'ardly no attentions to no shipreck, partikler as they was only Germins aboard, yet I don't consider as that old Beastmark did ought to send 'em to sea to drownd us close in shore a-goin' to Injier, and even Germins didn't

ought to be drownded like dogs cos they're poor, and Beastmark wants to get rid on 'em; as in course is perwidin' for 'em, but I'd 'ang 'im for murder.

Whyever can't they go to sea in summer and all start together, as one wessel would be company for another; and tho' parties might think as thero would be collusion, that's better than a-goin' to the bottom, or bein' run down by a royal yott; and as for parties a-sayin' it would 'urt Queen Wictorier's feelin's to find any fault with 'er capting, wot's she care for captings? Why, if she thought as he were rong, she'd stand at the mast-'ead, see 'im 'ave the cat, and glory in it, if he were 'er own son, cos she's got lots of captings and to spare, and don't want nobody to be a-flunkeyin' of 'er, as the sayin' is, cos tho' in course she can't do no rong, as we all knows, yet it can't be right for 'er captings to be a-runnin' everythink down as comes in their way, and might meet with their match some day, and get blowed out of the water theirselves. Cos in course that Alberta were in the rong, and am glad as that the judge up and spoke in the Parlymint, and denied as ever he'd said anythink to bully the jury, as would try a queen jest like anybody else, the same as they did Queen Carerline, tho' she did get off, as was mother to the Princess Charlotte, as died with 'er fust; and 'er good gentleman he

settled agin over in Brussels, and 'ad a second family, as died cnormous rich, they say, thro' never a-foolin' of 'is money away, as showed 'is sense, cos in course anythink might be upset with a riverlution, and then if he 'adn't got nothink put by agin a rainy day, he'd be up a nice tree, as the sayin' is.

But no doubt Queen Wictorier would 'old with them spellin' bees, cos of 'er grandchildren a-comin' on, and they do say as werry often there's bad grammar even in 'er own royal speeches thro' 'er a-trustin' others for to rite 'em out for 'er; but, law, there ain't no trustin' nobody in this world to do nothink, and certingly it's as well as parties should be able to read and rite so as others mayn't get 'em to put their names to a paper without knowin' wot it's about, as may sell you up in a week or two, and that's why Brown he do stick up for everythink in the way of books and picters, and all them things as he considers edicates the masses, as as he calls 'em.

"Yes," I says, "but edicate 'em right, and not with murders and robberies, like that there Shakespeare."

"That's right," says Brown, "'ave your knife into Shakespeare."

"Well," I says, "I knows more about 'im than I did," thro' that time as me and Mrs. Padwick went to see "Macbeth" on the quiet, when I was a-

stoppin' along with 'er; cos Mrs. Padwick she's werry fond of anythink like 'istory, and that's 'ow we come to go, thro' 'er a-talkin' so much about it, and she says to me, "Surely, Martha, you'd like to go see any one as is famous in 'istory?"

"Yes," I says, "partikler if it's William the Conkerer or July Seizer."

"But," she says, "you've 'eard tell about 'Macbeth'?"

"Well," I says, "not exactually, tho' in course I've 'eard scores of times about Mad Bess, as were 'arf-sister to Mad Tom, tho' different mothers."

She says, "I'm a-talkin' about Macbeth, as is a play as is 'ighly instructin'."

"Oh," I says, "bother plays, as is all rubbish!"

"Oh," she says, "he lived once upon a time in Scotland."

"Ah," I says, "they're pretty nigh all Macs there, as was always famous for their dancin'."

"Well," she says, "I wish as you'd come along with me one evenin' and see it, as is bein' acted somewheres in the Strand."

"Well," I says, "if you wishes it, in course I'll go."

So she says, "I 'ardly likes to ask you, a-knowin' as you don't 'old with plays, and don't think much of Shakespeare."

I says, "I certingly would not go and see Shakespeare agin along with Brown, for he's reglar mad over 'im; but," I says, "any one on the quiet, like you, so long as I ain't down in a pit nor shet up in a box."

"Oh," she says, "we got front row places, as is upper circle."

"Ah," I says, "I'm glad of that, for I can't abear anythink wot's low, and you're always thought a deal more on in them upper circles, as parties looks up to; but," I says, "I do 'ope as there ain't a lot of murders."

She says, "I think he only kills the king!"

"Oh," I says, "that aiu't nothink to them Scotch ways, cos look at Oliver Cornwall, as caught King Charles on the 'ip somewheres about Scotland, leastways a good way off town, cos in course they wouldn't never dare do sich a thing in London, not wot but one king's 'cad were cut off close agin Cherrin' Cross, where' is staty stands to this day, and that's why they put it on agin, when some waggerbones took and pulled it down off the peddystil; and my mother well remembered the winder in White'all whero he come out, as is one at the side. But," I says, "if they go a-cuttin' of a live man's 'ead off in the play, I shan't set and see it done, so if I comes out all of a 'urry don't let me

disturb you, but I don't 'old with murders in cold blood."

We certingly did go quite the ladies in two busses, as put us down at the door of that theayter, and we got our front seats all right thro' Mrs. Padwick a-knowin' the box-keeper.

It were a good bit afore it begun. They played music to keep us awake, while a good many come in as was all werry solim lookin', and some 'ad books, and then there was the music, as was werry solim, and then up went a curting, and there was three reglar old cinder-sifters as ever I see, as says to one another, "When shall we three meet agin."

I says to Mrs. Padwick, "I should think somewhere in the fields, to frighten the birds away."

"'Ush!" says a party behind me.

I says, "Well, if questions is asked, ansers is espected, I suppose."

Says Mrs. Padwick, "I begs you to be quiet, that's a dear."

I says, "By all means," and shets up.

But of all the foolery as them old fieldmales talked I never did 'ear sich rubbish, and kep it up all thro' the play, a-tellin' a lot of lies to that Mackbess. I don't believe in them fortin-tellers, and never shall, tho' I ain't got nothink to say agin the cunnin' man, as certingly did tell Mrs. Padwick where to look for 'er Shantilly wail as she 'ad stole

off 'er bonuet close agin Lambeth Church, and found behind a chest of drawers in 'er own second pair back; but for all that, I don't 'old with 'im incouragin' sich characters, as is in gencral thieves.

I couldn't make 'ead nor tail out of that play, as were that confusin' with witches, and sojers, and 'eavy feeds, and ghosts, and murders—for Mackbess he'd got a werry short way to get rid of 'em all, for them as he didn't murder 'isself he got others to kill off, so it come to the same thing in the end, but their ghosts took and 'aunted 'im, and one on 'em set oppersite to 'im at supper, and 'is wife she took to sleep-walkin', as must 'ave broken 'is rest.

So I says to Mrs. Padwick, "The more I sees of that 'ere Shakespeare, the no betterer I don't think on 'im, for of all the mean and torterin' plays as ever was rote, this is the wust, as is blood and murder all thro';" for me and Mrs. Padwick 'ad been a-settin' quiet to see this 'ere Mackbess, as she esplained to me, when the curting were down, as preaps were as mad as Tom and Bess, as was brother and sister, as showed it must 'ave come by the father's side, as often runs in families, the same as red air or a squint; and this Mackbess must 'ave been a reglar idjot for to believe in them old witches at fust when he see 'em, as wasn't nothink but men dressed up, and in course was only a-sellin' on 'im

in a-sayin' as he should be king hereafter; but fust they said as he should be Corder. Well, I says, that ain't much to be, for I can jest remember 'im as murdered Maria Martin behind the red barn at Polstead, as is where a aunt of Brown's come from, and was found out thro' 'er mother a-dreamin' as she were berried there by a party as arterwards married a party as kep a school. She was a nice party to 'ave a 'and in young gals' edication, as was 'ung by the neck, like that willin Wainrite the other day, as I always said as it were reglar 'umbug about Stokes bein' persecuted, as knowed 'is ways about, and as to edication, that fellow were edicated, as shows as it's not the want of larnin' as makes parties bad, and as to plays a-edicatin' 'em, nearly all the plays as ever I've see 'ave been orful morals, and werry undecent dressed, and I'm sure I've see dancin' as was enuf to make 'em read the Riot Act.

I really were not sorry when a party as the Macduffer took and put that poor Mackbess out of 'is misery, for he got quite foolish in 'is 'ead, and so did 'is good lady, as they said put 'im up to all 'is bad ways; but, as I've said afore and will say agin, that's all rubbish, cos no wife wouldn't never dare 'int at sich a thing as murder, unless the 'usbin spoke fust, or showed as he were on there, and nobody couldn't blame Macduffer for killin' on Mackbess, as he did by runnin' 'im thro' in the end,

cos he'd been and killed Macduffer's wife and family, a-goin' to 'is 'ouse when he weren't at 'ome. So he killed 'im agin while 'is back were turned, jest like Taffy were a Welshman's ways, and the Scotch is a good deal like the Welsh.

I don't think as ever I did relish anythink more than a pint of beer as I got a-comin' out of that theayter, as were with all the cold whisky-and-water in the world, as were wot poor dear Mrs. Padwick 'ad to take thro' fear of 'er roomatics, as is fust cousin to gout, as is wot 'er father died on, thro' its a settlin' in the stomich, as is wot killed King George the Fourth, as took laudanum and brandy by the gallon for to give 'im ease, as some say were a general break-up; but, law bless me, we must 'ave somethink to kill us, and it don't much matter wot it is, tho' some suffers more than others, partikler in a watery grave, as many thinks a 'appy death, but nobody knows nothin' about it, and all must take their turns; but as to bein' edicated at a theayter, why, it's rubbish.

"Is it?" says Brown; "why, they've got a wonderful clever spellin' bee at one of the theayters, as is by one of the grand professors in the name of Dr. O'Toole."

"Oh!" I says, "I've often 'eard speak of 'im as were a famous Hirish tutor, as my dear mother remembered well; so in course that must be all

right; not as a theayter is the best school for children, thro' bein' that late at night, but I'd a deal sooner send a child of mine to be taught by Dr. O'Toole than any of these Board Schools, where they learns nothink; for tho' I did know a wonderful clever little gal and boy once, as did used to hact from the cradle, but neither on 'em didn't grow up clever, for she married a boot closer as ill-treated 'er, and the boy he took to the sea. So I don't think as it matters much 'ow any one spells so as their 'art's in the right place, for a nobler 'arted old lady never drored breath than Mrs. Pugley, as were Lady Wittles's mother, as couldn't rite nor read, and lived over ninety for all that, and knowed 'er way about jest as well as if she'd 'ave 'ad all the dixonaries in the world in 'er 'ead, and didn't believe in ghosts, and yet said 'er prayers every night of 'er life, as soon as ever she got into bed, as showed as she knowed 'er dooty; and yet only a lighterman's widder, as a many looks down on, and yet I've knowed lightermen myself as was fine built men, as they did ought to be, to pull away at them 'eavy barges, with a strong tide agin 'em, let alone steamers a-runnin' foul on 'em, the same as that beast of a Germin as took and sunk all them poor dear souls off Dover, as I 'ope they'll 'ang the lot from their own yard-arms, and wish old Beastmark were among 'em. Not as there

was any occasions for Miss Pilkinton to turn up 'er nose, and bust out a larfin' at me a-sayin' as I should go to a spellin' bee."

She says, "If you do, I do 'ope, Mrs. Brown, you won't go upon the platform to espose yourself afore so many."

I says, "Wherever I goes, I shan't do nothink as don't become a lady, and Queen Wictorier 'erself can't do no more, as, bless 'er royal 'art, I see 'er a-goin' to Halbert 'All, to a royal consort as she ain't never give a thought to since she've been a widder, and well she looks; but, dear 'art, wot a change time do make to be sure, for I see 'er jest forty year ago, close agin the same place a-comin' thro' the park with 'er ma, and 'er 'air in ringlets, and lookin' that pale, as was in service myself, and a-carryin' the baby and all the other children out for a walk, and 'ave seen old King William and Queen Addle-'ead comin' thro' the park on their way a-goin' to Winsor, as were a good woman, tho' plain; and as to 'im, he were a reglar old salt, as the sayin' is, and a bit of a Tartar too; for I lived in Old Brompton Lanes, as was all market gardins, and the world weren't gone mad arter spellin' bees, and all manner in those days; not but wot I will say as gas and steam is great improvements on a rushlight, and the tail of a waggin as is wot poor people 'ad to put up with, and coals five pounds a chaldron.

But," as I says to Miss Pilkinton, "jeers ain't no argyments," as I often tells Brown. So that next week to that spellin' bee I went to, as were a noble sight, as the party said as they put in the chair, for to see so many a-thirstin' arter knowledge. I certingly were a-thirstin' myself, thro' bein' that parched all along of a bloater with my tea, as was werry relishin', but dried up my mouth like a lime basket. I'd got some refreshments in my reddicule, but couldn't take a drink out of the bottle afore all them parties; so I set a-listenin' to many parties afore my turn come; and the party in the chair asks the young lady settin' afore me to spell flematic; she hesitated a instant, so, I says, "f" in a whisper, jest to give 'er the tip.

"Out," says the man in the chair.

She says, a-gettin' up with a bounce, "You ain't no gentleman to ask a lady sich a word; not as I were a-goin' to spell it with a f, when it begins with a p," and out she went.

I bust out a-larfin', and says, "That is a good un."

"Wax," he asks next.

Says the party next but one to me, "Do you mean blows or other wax."

"W," I says.

"No," he says, "I means blows."

I says, "I don't care wot you means, but wax

is wax all the world over, the same as bees is bees!"

He says, "Don't you anser out of your turn, else I'll have you out."

So I didn't say no more, but set a-listenin' and a-parchin' that dreadful, that I was gettin' quite in a fever like; so I ropped up my little flat bottle in my 'ankercher, and set a-waitin' for a chance to use it, and then take a drain on the quiet. I set and listened, and never did 'ear wuss hignorance. Talk of leavin' out your h's, as Miss Ableths is so down upon, why, they took and left 'em out in happle and hice, and the hair as you breathes, and put 'em in in 'at on your 'ead, and 'ome, till I couldn't bear to set and 'ear sich hignorance.

At last that party says to me, "Helefant?"

So I gets up and says, "h——"

There was a roar of larfture, so I set down, and that feller 'ollers, "Out."

"Oh!" I says, "I'm quite ready to go, for never in my life did I 'ear sich hignorance and himpidence."

And down I goes and sets by a werry nice old lady, as made room for me to get a seat, as told me in a whisper as 'er own dorter 'ad been drove off one of them platforms thro' bein' asked to spell words as was downright disgraceful.

"Yes," says a party, with 'er arm in a sling, as

set the other side of me, as 'll never see fifty no more, "and wot do you think they asked me to spell?"

I says, "I can't guess."

She says, in a wisper, "Breaches! and when I screamed, the party said as he meant a 'ole in a wall."

I said, "If he asked me sich a question I'd 'ave give 'im a 'ot un over the knuckles; but," I says, "I must 'ave a drink, or I shall die, I'm that parched."

Says the old lady, "You can't get nothink to drink 'ere, they're all teetotalers."

I says, "'Umbugs, as ain't no better than 'eathens, in my opinion, not to be thankful for sich a blessin' as drink; and as to brandy, it 'ave saved more lives than the doctors; so," I says, "I'll jest stoop down my 'ead behind these parties' backs, as was a-settin' in front of me, and I can get a drink out of my 'ankercher unbeknown," and so I did; and then I offered the old lady a drop, as took it open, and a precious good swig she took at it.

"Pooh!" says a man in front, "wot a orful smell of rum!"

I didn't take no notice, but 'anded the bottle to the middle-aged lady on the other side, as declined. So then I ducks my 'ead a second time and took another pull at it; and jest as I'd took a second

mouthful, and then offered the old lady a drop more, some one behind give 'er a wiolent drive between the shoulders jest as she'd got the bottle to 'er mouth, as sent the licker the 'rong way. She give a wiolent 'oop like, and spluttered all over every one, a-droppin' of the bottle with a crash, and fallin' backards black in the face, and a-fightin' for 'er breath like mad. Every one got up, and there was a reglar 'ubub. I thought the old lady were gone, that I did; but she give a wiolent effort like, and got 'er breath back; and then she took and turned on me like a mad bull broke loose, sayin' as it was me as 'ad 'it 'er thro' a-begrudgin' of 'er the licker.

The chairman, he got up and said as he rose to order.

I says, "And 'igh time too, a-keepin' parties a-settin' 'ere in this 'eat, and not a drop of drink to bo 'ad for love or money."

He turns on me and says, "You're a most unhedifyin' old woman, to set sich a bad esample to our band of 'ope, as is in the gallery."

I says, "A 'opin' to get somethink to drink, as tea is the best thing for 'em."

He says, "'Old your tung or leave the 'all. 'Ow dare you interrupt the perceedin's like this! If you're hignorant yourself, don't stop others from bein' edicated."

I says, "You're a nice one to talk, as is as hignorant as dirt yourself, and don't know 'ow to spell helefant, and don't put a single h in its proper place."

"'Old your row," says he, a-losin' of 'is temper, cos he felt as I were a bestin' of 'im; "leave the 'all, or I'll send for the perlice."

I says, "Oh! no doubt that's 'ow you gets over your own hignorance, by insultin' of parties as knows better than you do, as any fool might do easy; and as to leavin' the 'all, I'll do so this werry hinstant."

"Not so fast," says a perliceman, as come up; "there's been a reglar gang of pickpockets in the place, and this," he says, a-takin' my arm, "is one on 'em."

I says, "Perlice, I'm surprised as you should dare to touch me."

He says, "Well, if you ain't a thief, you was settin' between two on 'em, one dressed up like a old ooman, and the other with 'er arm in a sling, as was both plants."

I says, "I never set eyes on 'em afore." I says, "Where is the old lady?"

"Oh!" says the Bobby, "she lewanted long ago."

I 'ollers out, "She've been and took my flat bottle, and, I've lost my redicule; and bless my 'art,

both my pockets is rifled; and wherever's my warm shawl and umbreller ?"

"Oh !" says the perlice, a-winkin, "you're too much of a sufferer."

I looks round and see Miss Abletts at the door; so I beckoned to 'er, and she come and spoke up for me, thro' bein' well beknown to that party as they called the chairman, as ain't no gentleman, in my opinion, for all that, as treated me that rude; for if I'd been a chairwoman, he might 'ave been civil, cos I should 'ave been a lady all the same.

So I went back to Mrs. Padwick's reglar upset, and don't know wot I 'ad in my pocket, so can't tell wot I've lost; so Brown says I ain't robbed at all, as he can prove to me out of Shakespeare.

"Ah !" I says, "he thinks nothink of murder by the score, so in course considers robbery a lark, as is ways I dont 'old with; and much good them spellin' bees must be when parties goes there only to pick pockets."

Says Brown, "What rubbish. Why, there's thieves in churches and chapels as is only there to rob the congregashuns."

I says, "Brown, don't speak that disrespectful of them ministers."

He says, "I didn't mean the ministers, tho' some of 'em is in for a bit of a swindle. I meant reglar thieves, as pertends to be pious."

"Well," I says, "I've 'eard you say as it were all my eye about preachin' the gospel to the poor, as most on 'em only did it for wot they can get out of it."

"Well," he says, "when I sees 'em a-doin' it for nothink, and not gettin' a 'ansome livin' at it, I'll begin to think as they may be right; but in general it's nothink but a trade and a werry easy way of earnin' your bread."

"Well," I says, "we must all live."

"Yes," he says, "all right; but don't let there be any gammon about labourin' for souls, as only means pew-rents."

I says, "Brown, you're a-gettin more of a red-'ot radical every day you lives, and will come 'ome some night a reglar fire-brand, and burn me in my bed. Why," I says, "the world's bad enuf, but wot would it be if it wasn't for religion."

He says, "I ain't got a word to say agin religion, Martha, but all I goes in at is parties as makes a livin' out of it, and pertends as they despises the world and 'ates its ways, but likes the good things on it for all that."

"Well," I says, "that ain't no business of ourn, for I'm sure I likes my comforts."

"In course you do, old gal," he says; "but you don't go about a-sayin' as anythink is good enuf for you, and as you never touches sperrits."

I says, "Brown, I'd scorn the action, for tho' I'm one as can't a-bear drink even in a man, as is 'orrible in a woman's mouth. Yet I'll take my dinner and supper beer, and likes a drop of somethink 'ot afore goin' to bed in winter, if I do take it cold without in the dog-days, tho' not like old Mrs. 'Uggins as 'ad pork for supper every night as it were in season, and a jorum of 'ot brandy and water the last thing, and tumbled out of bed in a fit, tho' that didn't kill 'er, as were 'arf-sister to Mrs. Plugley, as were Lady Wittles's aunt; and that's 'ow I come to nuss 'er, thro' Lady Wittles, as did use to come in 'er carridge three times a week to ask arter her, and died fust 'erself for all that, as were a woman as never indulged in nothink strong, and goodness knows where 'er son got 'is drinkin' ways from as died in a fit arter never bein' sober for three weeks, as I'm glad 'is mother never lived to see."

Says Brown to me, "There you go, Martha, a-eatin' that cold cracklin agin, as always brings on them nightmares of yourn, and you'll be wakin' me up with your dreams."

I says, "Oh, dear, no; I ain't 'ad no dreams to speak on for months."

"No," says Brown, "cos you've been more careful over wot you've took for supper, as I don't consider cold loin of pork a light thing."

I says, "There is doctors, I've 'eard say, as recommends it and says as arter game it's the lightest thing as you can eat."

"Well," says Brown, "give me a good supper of game, and you won't ketch me a-eatin' of cold pork arter it."

I says, "I didn't mean that; I meant as it were the next thing to game for lightness, as light it must be thro' bein' able to fly; tho', in my opinion, it ain't wot you eats as disagrees with you in a genral way, but your stomick bein' out of order; and then even a new-laid hegg will lay as 'eavy as lead, and a mutton-chop like a-swallerin' a lump of stone; and if you're all right, why, you might eat a mill-stone and never feel it, cos look at boys, wot they'll dewour, and bolt their wittles like dogs, and yet never feel no inconwenience; and I'm sure the more you thinks about things a-disagreein' with you, the more they'll do it."

"Ah," says Brown, "you're one of them as can always 'ave the argyment the way you wants it turned."

I says, "Will you come with me to the Grand Spellin' Bee, as is a-goin' to be 'eld under the Lord Mare, as will make all the Common Council come and answer; and they do say as Queen Wictorier might look in as is a-goin' to Whitechapel for to see the London 'Ospital, as is a place I well knows my-

self, and shows as she've got a feelin' 'art, and am glad as she's a-goin' in grand style, as must seem werry strange to 'er a-lookin' at all them crowds of people, and a-wonderin' 'ow they gets their bread; and a many on 'em that 'appy as they wouldn't change places with 'er, not if she wos to offer to share 'arf-a-crown with 'em. Ah! it's a singler world, and no doubt there's many a 'appy 'art a-beatin' under rags, while sorrer is a-cankerin' under royal robes as is too 'eavy to bear up agin, as is why Queen Wictorier don't never wear 'ern; nor yet no crown to 'er 'ead, as it's a mussy she didn't 'ave a 'eavy one on when she set down on her royal cap-strings the other day, as might 'ave upset 'er crown and all, and 'ave shook 'er werry throne under 'er, cos nothink ain't more unpleasint than to set down unawares, partikler with your cap-strings a-ketchin' in the back of your chair, as is 'ow it were found out as poor Fanny Belcher wore a front the same evenin' as she thought as she'd got a sweetart, as you can in general tell by the partin'; but she always 'ad a bit of fancy frillin' or somethink over 'ern, and only showed a bit of 'air jest over each temple, with ringlets and flowers; but when young Sam Welch, as was 'er sister's son, took and pinned 'er cap-string to the back of 'er chair, and she got up all of a 'urry, thro' the young rascal a-rushin' in, a-sayin' as the kitchin chimbley

were a-fire in the middle of a few friends to tea, when in course off went 'er cap and 'er 'air, as were mixed up with rose-buds, and showed a 'ead as grey as a badjer, with the top as bald as the parm of your 'and, with Mr. Plimton the plumber and glazier a-settin' next 'er, as 'ad jest berried Mrs. P., and 'ad whispered to 'er as he must 'ave somethink to love thro' bein that lonesome, but never went no further, and married the young woman in the bar at the Catherine Wheel, as 'ad a 'ead of 'air as you'd 'ave thought could defy detecshun, tho' 'er chinion did come off leavin' the church the werry day they was married, and led 'im a nice life, as were past fifty, and 'er only twenty-two, so 'ad better 'ave married Fanny, poor gal, tho' she is eight-and-forty, and a werry pretty property, but will do better yet preaps, for she's took to a chapel reglar where the minister's good lady is delycit, and two of the deekins is well-to-do widderers.

But as I were a-sayin', Queen Wictorier do look the Queen all over, and I am that glad as she's a-goin' about a-deal more, as will cheer 'er up, like poor Mrs. Wildin', the baker's widder, as after she lost Wildin' took to 'er back parlour with the weneshun blinds down, and wouldn't serve nobody, as was all werry well for 'er, but were a dreadful life for the poor, youngest gal as lived with 'er, so I couldn't stand it, and says to 'er, "You'll 'ave that

gal run away with the fust waggerbone as makes 'er the offer, under pretence of comin' in for a bun; cos, in course, grief is grief, but there's reason in everythink, so she took my adwice and sent that gal to school, as was only sixteen, and a deal too forard, and married 'er foreman within the twelvemonth, and went back to the shop while he looked arter the bakin's, as she were obliged to give up of a Sunday, thro' bein' so many, as kep' 'em at work at all day; not but wot it's 'ard on poor folks not to be able to get a bit of dinner baked on Sunday, and if I 'ad my way there should be reglar ovens open, and no ringin' the jints, nor nothink unfair, for I 'ates a cold dinner myself of a Sunday, leastways cold lamb and sallid is all worry well in the 'ight of summer, but not in winter, as the werry smell of the 'ot wittles cheers you up, and is temptin' to the eye, and relishin' to the tastes, and you enjoys your beer more with it, as don't go well with pickles or sallid as you eats with cold meat in a genral way; but as I were a-sayin', grief is grief, and I am glad as Queen Wictorier 'ave got over 'ern; cos there ain't no occasions to forget them as you 'ave lost, as is why I never can get over a widder a-marryin' agin, leastways any one as is well on in life, cos I'm sure if I were to lose Brown, I should as soon think of bein' berried alive in the same grave along with 'im, as settlin'

agin, as is wot I've always said, tho' he 'ave joked me over it, tho' I'm sure if I'm to go fust, I do 'ope as he'll 'ave some one to cheer 'im up, for he'd be dreadful lonesome, poor feller, a-settin' over 'is pipe without me, and no one to 'ave 'is bit of a supper all 'ot and ready for 'im; but I won't think of them things, as will no doubt be all ordered right.

I do think as Miss Pilkinton and Miss Abletts is mad over these 'ere bees, and as I says, "Why not 'ave readin' and ritin' Bees;" not but wot I often thinks as there's a deal of 'umbug about them things, and Brown thinks so too, and will let out agin them sometimes, when he 'ears parties a-talkin' a lot of rubbish, as is the way with both Miss Pilkinton and Miss Abletts, as in course I don't 'ave no disputes along with, but sometimes trots 'em out afore Brown; cos they're both afraid of 'im, as ain't a man to talk about them things as he don't understand, but will set like a mouse for muteness when any one is a-talkin' as knows what they're talkin' about, and often I gets 'im to speak out arter supper, when he ain't a-readin', and so it were as one evening last week, I says, to 'im, "Brown," I says, "in my opinion this 'ere edication is all rubbish, as is all werry well in a way; but, law bless me! 'ow many millions is there as 'ave gone to their graves without readin' or ritin' neither, tho' some says as they comes by natur;

not as I believes that cos my own dear mother she couldn't do neither, and as good-natured a 'oman as you'd meet in a day's walk, as the sayin' is."

So says Brown, "If I 'ad my way, every one should rite and read."

I says, "That's right, that is; but as to g'ography and 'istory, as is a pack of lies, why, they ain't worth readin'."

"'Old on," says Brown, "g'ography books ain't no lies, cos that can bo proved by any one a-goin' to the places."

I says, "Escuse me, but I've been about a good bit myself, and as to any one a-tellin' me as the world is round, why, they might as well tell me as I'm square."

Says Miss Pilkinton, as were a-settin' there, "Oh, Mrs. Brown, you really did not ought to espose your hignorance over things as you don't understand, as no doubt both 'istory and g'ography is sealed books to you."

I says, "I don't know what it is as your illudin' to, as don't know nothink about sealed books, as is the same as sealed packets to me; and if I was to go in a-guessin' at 'em like that there Claimint did used to, why, I might make a mess on it like 'im, but shouldn't 'ave the impidence to ask the Goverment for money to pay my espenses, cos, in course, if he could 'ave proved 'isself the right

man, why, there'd be lots of lawyers as would still go in with 'im, tho' in prison, and share the swag, as the sayin' is, when he's got out; and if he was to lose it, why, lawyers is in genral that noble lot as they wouldn't mind a-losin' if they knowed they was a-doin' right; and that's why every one is that fond on 'em."

So says Mrs. Padwick, "Oh, for mussy sake, don't let's 'ave that there Claimint on the trapeze agin."

"No," says Brown, "for if you begins 'im, I'm off."

"Ah," says Miss Pilkinton, "the poor ain't got no friends, and if he 'ad the money he could bring witnesses by the score to prove as he's the right man."

"Ah," I says, "no doubt if Goverment would pay he'd get all Orsetralier to come over and swear as they knowed 'im; but," I says, "let 'im bring the parties as picked 'im up when he were a shipwreck, and brought 'im ashore, and then any one will believe 'im."

"Now," says Brown, "if you don't shet up, Martha, I'll go 'ome without you."

So says Miss Pilkinton, "Jest to change the subjec', Mrs. Brown, who were Queen Lizzybeth?"

I says, "Why, Queen Lizzybeth, to be sure; jest as Queen Wictorier is Queen Wictorier."

"Ah," she says, "who were the father on 'er?"

"Why," I says, "the father of lies, I should say, for I knows as he's called Old 'Arry; and 'er mother were Jane Shore."

Out busts Miss Pilkinton a-larfin, and says, "Why, she lived ages afore."

I says, "Wot's that got to do with it? In course a mother lives afore 'er child, as wasn't never 'er father's lorful wife, and were turned out-of-doors and died in a ditch, as did used to be close agin the Shoreditch Railway Station."

"Come," says Brown, "you're a-gettin' out of your depth, old lady; Jane Shore weren't no relation of Queen Lizzybeth."

"Well, then," I says, "they was much of a muchness, as the sayin' is; but," I says to Miss Pilkinton, "you ask me questions in 'istory, and I'll put 'em down on paper, and see if I don't ans'er as well as the best spellin' bee as ever was, tho' you may sneer and jeer; cos I don't care for redicule, and could tell a many wot they don't know nothing about, and must say as I'm thankful I ain't a Anshent Brittin with nothink on but a bit of blue paint, as couldn't 'ave been no purtection agin the wind in the least, as ain't good for man or beast, as the sayin' is, and reglar blowed thro' my blue musling last Whitsuntide on Richmond 'Ill;

and as to livin' on acorns, I don't believe as they'd suit the British Constitution now-a-days, as isn't as 'ardy and strong as it did used to be; and it's all werry well to abuse the Romans, and say as they burnt parties in Smithfeel, as were no doubt cruel, but I'm sure I'm glad as they did interduce decent clothin' and 'ouses to live in; and as to burnin', why, wot are the difference between burnin' parties or blowin' on 'em from guns, as 'ave been done now constant in Injier, in my recollection; the same as them two gents as were called Cowin and Forsize, as wouldn't leave off when told, but took and blowed away sixteen extra, cos they'd tied 'em up, and didn't care to 'ave the trouble of untyin' 'em agin; so blowed 'em away to get rid on 'em. So don't let any talk about the Romans no more.

I never did 'old with Juyer Seizer's ways, as in course set a werry bad esample to them Germins, as you may see the remains on all along the Rhine, and no doubt is a imitatin' 'im as made that old Beastmark go about a-collarin' them places as didn't belong to 'im, as'll 'ave a bad fall some day, and serve 'im right, as is a reglar tyrant, and them as upholds 'im in 'is ways is wuss than 'im.

"Oh!" says Miss Pilkinton, "look 'ow the papers is always a-ritin' in 'is favour."

"Ah!" I says, "no doubt them papers, a many on 'em, would like to ride 'im down, and some don't care wot they rites so long as they gets the money out of people's pockets; but Beastmark ain't one for to let no papers talk and teach 'im 'is busyness; and if they dares to over there, he'd 'ave 'em burnt by the common 'angman and soon settle their ashes, and I know'd two as did used to lodge with me, a couple of 'arf-starved waggerbones, and one on 'em 'ad deserted 'is wife; and the other left 'er and the children to starve at 'ome, while he was out a-cadgin' for a dinner for 'isself, as he could get thro a-ritin' some lies, as he called public opinion, as means fellers a-ritin' and a-puffin' some rubbish, jest to swindle parties into buyin' it; the same as that there cleanin' powder, as took every hatom of my paint off my passage, and burnt 'oles in heverything as were washed in it; and as to pollytics, why, it's a downright mockery; for they'll jest write wot they're paid for, whether right or wrong.

Says Brown, "All papers ain't like that, cos there's a many as gives us all the news, and tells wot they thinks; but leaves us to think wot we likes, as is fair play; but," he says, "you're werry sharp, Martha, but take my adwice, and don't go to none of them bees, a listenin' to parties as tells you as you knows all about 'istory, and all manner, cos

they're only a-tryin' to get you on a string, and turn you into redicule."

I says, "I'm sure I don't want no more redicule than I've got and my dear mother 'ad afore me; but I shall keep myself to myself, and nobody won't get no change out of me, bees or no bees, as all the world is a-runnin' arter; but," I says, "Wot I wants to know is, wotever is the world a-comin' to when everybody is as wise as everybody else! Why, 'ow will they get a livin'.

Says Brown, "If you're 'ead never akes till that 'appens, you'll do; and now," he says, "I'm goin' to my club, and shall be in agin afore these ladies goes;" for Miss Pilkinton and Miss Abletts 'ad been 'avin' of a meat tea along with us, for I'd only 'ad a snack; and as to Brown, he'd only 'ad bread and cheese, thro' bein' that busy all day, and didn't want to wait till supper-time with nothink but 'is tea; so we 'ad a nice bet of cold griskin of pork, as was 'ow he come to warn me agin eatin' of cracklin' late at night; not but wot that pork were a chicken for tenderness.

But talk of black-'arted tyrants, why Tipper Sable was a angel to some of them fellers at them spellin' bees, as ave ordered me out of the room like a dog, cos I would not be put down; some on 'em 'ad me up for a-saltin' of 'im, cos I 'eld out my umbreller at 'im, as were only jest to pint out 'is

hignorances in stickin to them dixonaries, as is jest as likely to be rong as me; cos whoever is Doctor Johnson, arter all, as 'ave been dead and berried ever so long, as Miss Abletts says Queen Ann touched for the evil, and didn't do 'im no good, for she were only a usurper 'erself, as 'adn't no right to the throne, as she 'elped turn 'er father out on, and kep it agin 'er own brother, as come 'ome to 'er in the long run, for she berried over a dozen children, and 'er 'usban' to boot, as the sayin is, as drove 'er to drinkin', and were a reglar old sot; so I don't think much of Doctor Johnson myself; and, law, bless me, there's been lots of words inwented since 'is time, and altered too, let alone them Merrykins, as 'ave 'ad the impidence to rite a dixonary, as would be all werry well for their own Yankee Doodle rubbish as they talks, but ain't Inglish, nor yet won't never be as long as Britannier rules the waves.

But I were only bound over to keep the peace, tho' the magistrit did say as he were grieved to see a lady of my appearance up on sich a charge. As I were a-goin' to esplain to 'is wosship 'ow it were all a mistake, when he says, "Clear tho court!" and out we was all brushed like cobwebs.

But I ain't a-goin' to be put down by no magistrits nor Sunday-school teachers, but will 'old my own; and if I liko to spell fisic with a f, why

shouldn't I? as I'm sure Queen Wictorier would give me leave to, as is 'er property arter all, as is called Queen's Inglish; and, like Queen's weather, the werry best in course as can be 'ad.

Miss Abletts, she's a deal too upper-crust for me; and tho' I've nothink to say to 'er readin' out loud, I'm sure she often 'ave to stop to spell a 'ard word, tho' she do disguise it, under pretendin' to use 'er 'ankercher, or else a-yawnin', as is both easy to be seen thro'.

But as I says, why ever shouldn't parties spell their own ways, and let their naybours alone? and I'm sure if I knowed old Sinful spelt a word one way, I'd spell it another, so as not to give in to the old waggerbone, as 'ave been bested by 'is landlord, a-lettin' of the 'ouse over 'is 'ead, and he'll 'ave to go, as is a mussy, for I don't 'old with 'atin' your naybour as I do that old man; but he really is pison to me, for some one must 'ave told 'im about me bein' at the spellin' bee, for he goes about 'is back gardin, when he sees me in mine, a-singin'—

"'Ow doth the little spellin' bee
Improve each shinin' 'our,
By givin' to old Mother B——,
Long words beyond 'er power."

And then he'll 'oller up to 'is dorter, "Goin' to the spellin' bee to-night, Amelia? Cos you ain't

no need to, for we've got the speller nearer 'ome!"

I didn't say nothink to 'im, but only wished I were a good bumble bee, I'd soon be over 'is palins and wake 'im up, or wax 'im down, like as I've 'eard bees will do a snail as gets into their 'ives; not as old Sinful's ever likely to come into my place, an old cadger, that's wot he is, and that's wot he flew in sich a rage about when I asked our gal as wos a-standin' on the steps a-cleanin' the back-door if she'd ever 'eard speak of a party as was a receiver of stolen goods, as is wuss than the thief, nearly bein' sent to prison. He knowed as I were a meanin' 'im, for I was a-talkin' to the gal loud out of the back-parler winder, and she begun a-gigglin' aloud, cos there'd been the perlice and a search-warrant and all manner in that old feller's 'ouse, thro' 'im 'avin' give a boy a shillin' for a silver tea-spoon, as he'd been and stole from the place where he went to clean the boots and shoes; and old Sinful werry nigh got three months over it, and would too, but for 'is lawyer bein' that clever, as he reglar talked judge and jury over, but cost old Sinful a 'eap of money, as well as 'is good name, as in course were gone for ever.

But as I were a-sayin' to Miss Abletts, "Wot I should like to see is them fortin-tellin' waggerbones put down."

"Ah," she says, "it's not them as is to blame, but parties as believes in 'em, as edication will pint out the errors on."

"Well," I says, "there's parties as is edicated and yet believes in sperritialism, as is enuf to make you afraid to go to bed of a night, as is a deal wuss than a 'aunted 'ouse, like the one over in Lambeth as nobody wouldn't sleep in, and couldn't keep a servint, as were aperiently true, thro' noises bein' 'eard and lights a-movin' about at night, till the perlice broke in as turned out coiners; not but wot there's evil sperrits about a-goin' on disgraceful, I considers, and 'ave frightened parties to death with their dark doin's as made them orful noises out Kilburn way, as the poor lady next door as slep' on the ground floor took and jumped out of the back-parler winder in 'er night-gownd, a-forgettin' all about a little green-'ouse as were standin' there, as broke 'er fall, but took days to pick the glass out on 'er, as always afeared of ghosts, as is things as I never troubles myself about; but I'm sure it's over seven years ago as I went to see Mrs. Malins, as lived in a 'ouse where the eldest son did used to tamper with the sperrits, and make that free with old Bonyparty, and 'Are, and Burke, and Palmer, as nearly killed me thro' a-fallin' downstairs, for that young feller and 'is pals went on dreadful, and wuss than ghosts, as some believes; for I'm sure them

things as isn't 'uman did ought to be put down, tho' I don't suppose as my testamentary would go for much; but I must say, as if ever there was dealin's with 'im as didn't ought to be incouraged, there was that night in that 'ouse, as was a-doin' 'is works, as you're taught in the catechism, I never see nothink as was.

Not as I'm one as 'olds even with them conjurors as I went to see once, and the willin borrered my 'ankercher and then give me back a Scotch cambric in exchange for a lovely lawn, and laughed in my face; for tho' I could 'ave swore to it, yet, there beiu' no mark, could not be indemnified; and as to fortin-tellin', I never would 'ave mine done, tho' I must say as the way that cunnin' man told me where them three silver bottle-stoppers was gone, as was found on the werry spot as he said, as is werry wonderful; the same as Mrs. Pollings' white shawl as was looked for 'igh and low, and tho' the sink was not probable any more than the dust-'ole, thro' not bein' washed up and throwed away like my tea-spoons as anyone might with the tea-things, as is quite natral; not as I'm one as throws away anythink 'asty, and must 'ave 'eard it fall, tho' always suspectin' the sweeps, as I never will 'ave agin in the middle of the day when things is layin' about.

Brown he'd got a ticket for to go to see one of

them machine shows somewheres up Paddington way as I didn't care for, so I says, "I will go early and take tea along with Mrs. Mansell, and you can come to supper, as 'ave asked us frequent, and will send 'er word, thro' bein' cook and 'ousekeeper up near the Hedgeware Road, with everythink found 'er and forty pound a-year, and a settin'-room like a little pallis as you might eat off the boards. So Brown said he would, and off I set quite early.

I must say I 'adn't no idea as some of them busses played you sich tricks a-takin' you all thro' London for to get to Bayswater, as I says there must be a short cut from Mile End Gate, so I give the conductor a tap and asks 'im why he come sich a round-about way.

"Wot do you mean by stoppin' the bus for that?" he says, quite rude, and bangs the door that wiolent as set the horses off, and if they didn't gallop like mad, and frightened the 'orses in another bus as begun a-gallopin' too; and the way as we went from one side of the road to the other, a-dashin' on like mad was like bein' tossed in a blanket.

A old gentleman in the bus hollared at 'im, and says, "Let me out; I'm not goin' to endanger my life."

"Nor more ain't I," says I.

"Come out, theu," says the conductor. "Look sharp! Where's your money?" says he.

I gives 'im a shillin', and if he didn't give me eightpence change all in coppers, as I dropped in the middle of the road jest in Oxford Street, close agin Regent Street, where he left me a-standin', with cabs and busses all round about me a-shoutin' to me, and nearly runnin' over me, as was a-stoopin' to pick up the money, as I only recovered three-hapence on, tho' I must say as many parties was werry perlite a-troublin' theirselves to look for it; not as I thought as them boys and roughs a-kickin' about the mud was a good plan for findin' 'em, as all scuttled away pretty quick thro' a policeman a-comin' up as led me by the arm on the pavement. So I says, "Is this the Marble Arch?"

"No," says he, "the Pantheon; but," he says, "it ain't much further, if you keeps on the shady side."

Bless the man, he's got nice ideas about far, he has, for it was nearly eleven when I got to the Marble Arch, where who should I see but our Jane, as was a-waitin' about with 'er eldest, as isn't quite three in sich a crowd, and the babby as is at the breast, for I'd started early to 'ave a bit of dinner with 'er.

So she says, "Why, mother, 'ow 'ot you do look, to be sure! Wot brought you 'ere so? You must want a something, mustn't she, Mrs. Woolley?" she says to a friend as was with her, a woman as I

can't abear, bein' one as is all fair to your face, with a tung as is knives and lancets behind your back.

I says, "I'm a-goin' to tea at Bayswater."

Mrs. Woolley says, "Tea?"

I didn't say nothink, but says to Jane, "Wotever's goin' on?"

She says, "Well, the troops is a-goin' to do their manuvres, as is why I asked Mrs. Woolley to meet me, cos I wanted to bring the boy to see 'em, and Mrs. Woolley she'll 'elp carry the baby."

I says, "I was a-thinkin' of comin' to see you, but you lives a good step from this."

She says, "Only the Queen's Road, as did used to be Black 'Orse Lane."

"Ah," I says, "I remembers it quite well," but couldn't have walked there, for I certingly were werry much done up, and took and leaned my back agin a post for to rest myself.

Jane says, "Mother, you are tired, and must come across the road and 'ave somethink, if it's only a seedy biskit and a glass of ale, for you requires it, and looks dead beat, don't she, Mrs. Woolley? Now, do try and persuade 'er, that's a good soul."

So she says, "Yes, Mrs. Brown, pray do take a somethink, as is only across the road, as is easy to get at thro' lamp-posts in the way, as is put up for

to purtect you agin them busses, as comes round you on all sides, let alone other public conveniences as is bein' drove in every direction, and carridges by the million."

If it 'adn't been as I were that faint thro' the day bein' that swelterin', I would not a took nothin', for I knowed that Mrs. Woolley's deceitful ways, as it was one word for me and 'arf-a-dozen for 'erself, as the sayin' is, for I knowed 'er tricks, thro' 'avin' watched 'er narrow when nursin' of Jane, as never 'eld with 'er ways with that child, as I'm sure couldn't be a good nuss to sleep thro' its screams, a-sayin' as it were all temper, whereas I found the pin myself, as is a woman as would swear black is white, a-darin' to say as it 'ad been dropped off of me on to the infant, thro' bein' that jealous of me a-'ushin' of it up, and made words 'twixt me and Jane, not as ever I'm a-goin' agin my own flesh and blood.

I'm sure I was that terrified a-gettin' across that road and back, that wot I did take didn't seem to do me no good, and throwed me into that 'eat as I thought I never could have bore myself, tho' I 'ad a musling gown with a barege shawl, as was that flimsy as I didn't seem 'arf clothed, thro' it bein' wot I calls a breezy day, with dust in that Park a-comin' up in clouds, and the sight of people as 'ad come to see the sojers reviewed, as were not aware

on as there wasn't no scein' thro' the crowd as was a-standin'.

Well, there was parties as 'ad brought forms to stand on, as would throw you up over people's 'eads, tho' I was doubtful myself about gettin' up, for they was that rickety as I should not like to 'ave trusted to, but one young man he was a-tryin' it on, and says to me, "Bear you, mum? Why, it's strong enough for a prize hox!" and idjots as was a-standiu' by grinned.

So we walks on till we comes to a plank as was supported on barrels, as the party as owned it jumped on for to prove it strong, and 'is good lady says as they wasn't in that line, but only come out for to see it theirselves, as is a field day full worth the money, as was threepence each, and agreed to 'old Sammy up.

Just then come a nice old gentleman as was stout and cheerful, as says he'd try it, and up he gets, and advises me, as was 'esitatin', when them parties as it belonged to 'oisted me up unawares.

Certingly it was a grand sight to see them troops, as moved like machines, a-jumpin' and a-turnin' round, as is their manuverin' ways.

Says a party next me, "'Ere's the Duke."

I says, "Wot Duke? Why," I says, "he's dead."

"No, that he's not," says the old gentleman as was a-standin' up by me.

"Well," I says, "I see 'is funeral, that's all I knows, and remembers 'earin' of the battle well as he won, as there was a deal a-talkin' about when I was a very young gal, where his leg was shot off thro' tryin' to save Shaw the Life Guardsman, as was massacreed by the Prussians a-comin' up in the moment of victory."

He says, a-laughin', "It's the Duke of Cambridge."

I says, "Really, I've 'eard tell of Cambridge very often, but never 'eard as it was a Duke," and if he didn't bust out laughin' like mad. So I says, "Whoever is the others all about 'im in feathers on 'orseback?"

"Oh," says the old gentleman, "that's the staff."

I should say as he was foolish in 'is 'ead, cos any one could see the staff as the Duke was 'oldin' in 'is 'and, but I didn't say nothink, as them lunatics is often took spiteful if conterdicted.

Well, the sun was a-beatin' down on my 'ead, and I was lookin' at them soldiers, as must be dreadful in battle. I says, "There ain't no fear of their firin' on us unprovoked, I suppose?" for I 'ave 'eard tell of sich things, and spent balls ain't no joke, as 'as been death to thousands, for I never

shall forget our Joe a-ketchin' me accidental between the shoulders with a ball as he was playin' rounders with, so can easy fancy what lead must be.

Well, Jane she'd got down, so 'ad Mrs. Woolley, thro' the infant bein' fractious, and just then the soldiers let fly all of a sudden simultaneous with that bangin' and smoke in clouds, as it gave me that suddin start as I throwed back my arms violent with a scream, as made every one look round, and I ketches that poor old gentleman as was next me sudden in the pit of the stomach accidental with my elbow, as made him start back that forcible as upset the plank as we was all a-standin' on, and away I went backwards, and should 'ave been killed if the old gentleman under me 'adn't broke my fall, as didn't take it in good part, tho' wotever parties could see to laugh at I can't think.

I says, "Don't stand there a-grinnin' but lend me a hand up some on you," as they did at last, tho' the old gentleman was most hurt, not as he fell far, and said it was my weight as 'ad nearly stifled 'im, as brought on words, thro' Mrs. Woolley a-remarkin' as she should think so indeed; as is a reglar mask of skin and bones 'erself. So I says, "It's lucky as it wasn't you as fell on 'im, for you'd 'ave cut 'im to bits like a iron hurdle." As I 'eard 'er with my own ears call me a swelterin' porpus. So I says, "Jane," I says, "if that field-

male is a-goin' 'ome with you, I knows myself too well for to put it in 'er power to insult me under my own dorter's roof." So I says, "I should prefer the omblibus, as will set me down within five minutes of Mrs. Mansell's." So I says, "Let's part friends," and for all as she could say, I would go, thro' 'er a-sayin' as she could shut 'er door agin that party as 'ad walked in from Ealin', as I should not 'ave wished 'er to, tho' in my opiniou a low-lived woman, as I could tell through 'er conwersations in that crowd, as made a deal too free with strangers for me.

As to inspectin' them soldiers it's all rubbish, and waste of powder and ball, as will end bad some day thro' their firin' that permiscous at parties as is a-standin' 'armless. Tho' Brown will 'ave it as it was only powder as they fired, tho' I knows better, for I could 'ear the balls as one on 'em must 'ave knocked me over, and it's a mussy as I'm alive to tell the tale.

So off I walks myself, a-kissin' Jane and the children, but not a-takin' no notice of that field-male. Bein' that near Mrs. Padwick's, I jest looked in and 'ad a bit of cold weal and bacon along with 'er, and 'ad a good rest, and 'er and me set a-talkin' over a sofy cover as she were a-makin' as I 'elped 'er with, tho' in my opinion it won't never set well on that sofy, for she've been and

sloped the back too much on one side, as puckers the other. So wot with workin' and talkin' the time slipped away, and when I'd tidied myself up a bit, I got a bus at the end of the street, but for all that I never got to Mrs. Mansell's till nearly five, as was 'er time for tea, and glad to see me.

It is very near two years ago since she lodged with me, thro' bein' out of place, after 'er old master's death, as left 'er a trifle, tho' still in 'er prime, and not likin' a idle life turned to service again, and was soon suited, and certingly a good place she 'ave got, and as nice a cup of tea as ever I took, if she 'adn't put in a pinch of soda, thro' the water bein' that 'ard as nails, which give a flavour as was physicky, in my opinions.

"I'm glad as you 'ave dropped in," she says, "Mrs. Brown, for we've got such doin's up-stairs to-night, for master's eldest as only comes into sleep, and not that often, as got some lords and gents a-comin' for their spirritial doin's upstairs."

"Oh! indeed," I says, not rightly knowin' what she was a-drivin' at, but thinkin' as she meant prayers.

She says, a-seein' me puzzled, "It's dealin' with the sperrits they're goin' to 'ave."

"Oh! indeed," I says, "then I'm sure as I'm one as ought to speak well of them, for nothink else 'as ever brought me thro' them spavins, as 'ave set

in that sudden as knots was nothink to what I felt bein' tied in my side, and a-pourin' down brandy, as seemed like water, by the glassful."

"Oh!" says she, "it's not them kind," she says, "but the departed sperrits."

"Wot," I says, "you don't never mean the dead?"

"Yes," says she, a-droppin' of 'er woice 'oller like.

"My goodness me," I says, a-startin' up with my 'art in my mouth, leastways, I'm sure it might 'ave been, but for the tea as I jest took a mouthful on, and was near choked thro' a suddin ring at the bell, close to my ear, as made me jump out of my skin, as turned out to be only the baker's boy as 'ad come with the fancy bread.

So Mrs. Mansell when we'd done tea says, "When they're all in that room upstairs, as is the libery just at the top of the kitchen stairs, we'll go up on the quiet, and listen to wot they're a-doin' on."

I says, "They won't be a playin' on us no tricks, will they?"

"Oh!" she says, "we'll stand close agin the glass door as leads down to the kitchen, so if they're a-comin' out of the room we can lewant sudden."

"Ah!" she says, about nine, "there they are, as come in with a latch key at all 'ours; not as

they give much trouble," she says, "thro' 'avin' everythink as they wanted in that libery, as were a smokin' room, with double doors, so as the smell shouldn't get into the 'ouse."

And certingly I must say of all the rollicking lots as ever did come into a 'ouse it was them sperritial parties as had been a dinin', and come in jest as I were expectin' Brown, and used bad language about tea when offered by Mrs. Mansell, and said that as to sperrits, I'm sure they did ought to be able to call 'em up, for the way as they was consumed nobody wouldn't credit; so when they was shet in we went up and 'eard 'em a-rappin' on tables like mad, and the bell a-ringin' incessant; but as to the other world I don't believe as they ever really give it a thought, tho' they did go on like a something solemn, for they put out the lights, and when the rooms was dark, tho' some on 'em I could 'ear was bustin' out constant with keepin' under their laughter.

It were what I calls reglar 'umbug, as far as I can judge thro' the key-'ole and crack of the door, as listenin' at give me a crick in my neck, as I felt for weeks, and nothin' to see after all; and, as to music, if them sperrits can't play better than that, they'd better leave it alone, I should say, as is only makin' a disgraceful, noise wherever they may be, as did ought to be ashamed of theirselves, a-throwin'

things about the room as they did, cos we could 'ear 'em, and it's a mercy as it was only a guitar and tambourine as come a-flyin' about the gentlemen's 'eads, and they're thick enuf, for if it 'ad been the grand piano 'ad took to flyin', as was standin' in the corner, they must have been crushed into mummies.

They frightened me to death very near, as was listenin' with Mrs. Mansell, when they begun to ask them dead questions, and I'm sure as it served that capting with a eye-glass right, if he did get a blow in the 'ead thro' bein' that disrespectful in askin' his ma about 'er infernal state, as drank 'erself to death, as Mrs. Mansell knowed; but she've been dead in 'er grave this fifteen years; so, as Mrs. Mansell said, it's shameful to be a-draggin' such things up.

So I says to Mrs. Mansell, as was close agin the glass door at the top of the stairs, all of a tremble, "We'd better go down, for if they aggrawates the dead too far it will be awful."

She says, "Let's listen;" and jest then come a sepulchre voice as said, "I see 'er," and jest then the door flew open. I went a-sprawlin' all fours into the room, and Mrs. Mansell with me.

I never did 'ave such a blow as I got right in the small of my back in jumpin' up, as made me reel, and send Mrs. Mansell a-flyin' down three

stairs at a time, with me arter, and both on us come a cropper on the mat, and if I 'adn't broke my fall by 'oldin' on to Mrs. Mansell, as rebounded at every step, I should 'ave been as much busted out all to pieces as my things was, and in that tremble as give Brown a turn, when he come in to fetch me, and as to them sperritial lords and gents, they went away jest on eleven, a-makin' a noise as was enough to raise the dead. But I shan't never forget them sperrits, for thro' our stoppin' to 'ave a bit of supper, along with Mrs. Mansell, for I required a somethin' arter wot I'd gone thro', as was not to be got till late; we missed the bus, and had to walk every step of the way 'ome, Brown a-jeerin', when I said I wish as a sperrit would float me 'ome, a-sayin' as it would take a good strong sperrit to float me thro' the air, as was never more dead beat in my life, and I'm sure it give me a shock as I didn't get over for never so long, and that's why I hates them things, as I considers presumption, a-darin' to pry into the nest world, and the sooner as parties is taught as they didn't ought to do it the better. So if spellin' bees 'elps to turn 'em to things of this world, why, they're a deal better than them fancy things as 'ave afore now sent parties off their chumps, as the sayin' is; but I ain't a-goin' to be put down like the dirt under their feet by any of them whipper-snapper bits of schoolmasters, nor yet by winegar

bottles of old maids as keeps schools, and thinks theirselves everybody, and so I told Miss Ableths, as were a-larfin' at the idea of Queen Wictorier a-'oldin' of spellin' bees, as I'd 'eard say she were a-goin' to."

I says, "It may be werry larfable, but you knows as well as me, that Queen Wictorier would a deal rather 'old a spellin' bee than one of them drorin' rooms, as is a deal more useful; and no doubt she's sick to death of seein' Old Dizzy, and all them musty fusty old fellers all a-standin' about 'er, and them ladies in their dimons and feathers, all a-curtseyin' and a-bowin' down afore 'er; as is wastin' 'er time, and theirn too for that, and I'm sure I shan't never forget Mrs. Deputy Wobbles a-goin' to Court, as were presented by Lady Wittles, as was that lusty and red in the face, as she quite took the colour out of 'er ruby satin train, with hemeralds and garnits for jewels, as looked showy, with poppies and gold flowers in 'er 'ead, and ostrich feathers to top 'em up, as you can't go to Court without, as were wot led to a row atween Mrs. Wobbles and Alderman Wiggins's lady, as both come dressed to Lady Wittles."

"Mussy on us," says Mrs. Wiggins, "you never ain't a-goin' to take that ridiculous party to Court, Lady Wittles; you will 'ave 'er Grashus Majisty split 'er sides with larfture."

"'Ush," says Lady Wittles, "she'll 'ear you."

"Oh! let 'er go on," says Mrs. Wobbles, as come a-bustlin' in, for she 'ad only gone into the back drorin'-room, to see the set of 'er train in the double lookin'-glasses, as reached down to the floor, and Mrs. Wiggins thought as she'd gone up-stairs to 'ave the last touch put to 'er 'air, with the powder puff over 'er face and neck.

"Let 'er go on," says she, "I knows I'm a figger, and a ridiculus objec, but then I never 'ad a father to give me a Parishun edication, nor yet turned out a frordelent bankrup in the end."

"But," says Mrs. Wiggins with a sneer, "a party as ain't a 'undred miles off, 'ad a uncle as were 'ung for 'orse-stealin', as no doubt 'is family is natrally proud on."

"You're a falsehood." says Mrs. Wobbles.

"You're no lady, and ain't fit for ladies' company," says Mrs. Wiggins, as she bounced out of the room, a-sayin' as she were a-goin' to shet the door.

"I knows werry well if Queen Wictorier knowed it she'd as soon 'ave Lady Twist as you in 'er drorin'-room. I despises you too much to say wot I've 'eard about your own mother," 'ollers Mrs. Wobbles.

"You dare say that agin," says Mrs. Wiggins, a-turnin' back as white as a sheet; "say it agin, and I'll soon settle your 'ash."

I do believe as they'd 'ave took and fort it out on the spot, only Lady Wittles got atween 'em and took and shet the drorin'-room door, with 'er back agin it, and so put a stop to their talkin.

Well, arter a little time off she went along with Mrs. Wobbles, to present 'er at the Drorin' Room, as in course couldn't 'elp wot 'er uncle were. They wasn't gone quite a 'our, when back come Lady Wittles all of a tremble, and rumpled dreadful, and she says to me—

"Oh! my good Martha, them two low-bred creeturs got to blows."

I says, "Never; not afore Queen Wictorier's own face, I hope."

"No," says Lady Wittles, "but in the next room to 'er, where there's always a deal of crowdin' and scrougin', and Mrs. Wobbles declares as Mrs. Wiggins took and stuck a large 'air-pin into the fleshy part of 'er arm, as revenged 'erself by puttin' down 'er 'eel with all 'er might on to Mrs. Wiggins's foot, as is a reglar martyr to corns, both soft and 'ard. Mrs. Wiggins give 'er a wiolent shove, jest as parties was all a-movin' on into Queen Wictorier's werry own presence, as knocked agin an old gentleman's foot, as was a 'obblin' with gout, and made 'im roar out; and then Mrs. Wiggins took and fainted dead off, thro' bein' that tight laced, and there was a nice 'ow-d'ye-do; so I cut away and

left them, for fear as Queen Wictorier should ask whoever brought sich rowdies into 'er Court."

"Ah!" I says to myself, "that's why I can't abear them courts, as there's always rows a-goin' on in, whether 'igh life or low," not as I said it to Lady Wittles, because she wasn't born to nothink werry grand, thro' 'er father bein' in the 'olesale tripe line, as left 'er a 'eap of money, and that's 'ow she come to marry Mr. Wittles, as were a drysalter, but a golden-'arted woman, as never give 'erself no stuck-up airs, nor yet showed temper; and they do say as 'er own grandmother did used to go about Clerkenwell with the barrer a-sellin' tripe from door to door, as was the fashion in them days to buy lots of things at the door; as I don't care about doin' myself, thro' bein' in genral stale, as is the refuse of the market, as the sayin' is; and as to poultry, why, old Sinful he bought some wild ducks at the door last spring, as 'is gal told our gal when they come to be drawed was full of sand, besides bein' that orful fishy as you could smell 'em in roastin' all down our gardin, as come into the back parlour winder, as I'd got open. So I says to the gal down in the back airey, "Wotever beastliness are you a-burnin'?" She says, "It ain't me, mum; it's next door, as 'ave got game for dinner." I says, "Never! I should think it must be as that old tuppeny tinker 'ave been and fell in the fire." Old

Sinful were in 'is gardin', and feelin' riled at 'earin' me call 'im a tinker, cos he 'ad been in the 'ardware line, so 'earin' me, put 'is 'ead over the wall, and says, "If it was you as were a-burnin' it would be all the fat in the fire;" as was more than flesh and blood could stand, so I took and shied the water in 'is face, as was quite clean, as I were a-goin' to wash up my best chiney in, as 'ad got dusty thro' bein' put away in a closet in my back parlour. He give a yell, as brought out 'is dorter, and he swore as I'd been and throwed witriol all over 'im, as in course 'is dorter see were a false'ood, but said as I were the noosance of the naybour'ood, as I didn't mind; but old Sinful he took and rote to Brown to complain, and Brown give me a good talkin' to about throwin' things over the wall at parties, tho' he rote to old Sinful, a-tellin' im about 'is own insultin' ways over the wall, as give the old feller a lesson, for I ain't 'eard nothink of the lot since, as keeps their feelins' to theirselves.

Tho' preaps it's owin' thro' me bein' so much away along with Mrs. Padwick, and Brown when in town a-stoppin' there too; and really you wouldn't think as you was a-livin' in the same country as the Mile End Road when your a-stoppin' up by the Marble Arch, as no doubt will seem strange to Queen Wictorier in wisitin' Whitechapel, and it's a pity as she don't go down that Bow Road, as is a

fine noble road, tho' we 'ave let our 'ouse, and there was a time as fust-rate fam'lies lived there, as was convenient for the Docks, and rents that moderate as you could bring up a family on your income; partikler the Scotch, as is a careful lot, and don't eat butter and marmalade together on the same bread; as is wot young Trotter would do in spite of 'is mother, when not earnin' a fardin and livin' on that poor ooman, as 'adn't nothink to support 'er but 'er mangle, as is only three-'apence a dozen, as you 'ave to turn your arms off to make a-livin' at.

But as to 'im he wouldn't work, tho' he did get a prize at the spellin' bee, tho' I wish as there was some law to make sich idle young rascals go in for a good spell of work, as is better than any spellin' lessons; and it's all werry fine for Miss Abletts to talk about Maver's Spelliu' Book bein' that useful, but there's a many a good workman as 'ave brought up a ole family, and scores on 'em too, as never 'eard of spellin'-books nor dixonary neither.

But as I told Miss Abletts, I didn't want to set myself agin learnin', so agreed as I'd go along with 'er, and set quiet and listen at a grand spellin' bee up in town, where there was a-goin' to be a lot of swells, with a real live Lord in the chair, and a Bishop were a-goin' to ask the questions. Certingly, he were only a Colonial, but that's better than nothink, and might as well 'ave been 'ome

produce, as Brown calls it, for he was always that wanted in London as he were obligated to leave the 'eathen over there to take care of theirselves; but them colonials don't deserve sich blessins as bishops, as was that ungrateful lot as they wouldn't 'ave one bishop as were sent 'em not at no price, a-sayiu' as they didn't want 'im, as shows orful blindness, to be sure.

The 'all as we went to were werry well filled, but me and Miss Abletts got werry nice seats, and werry near the platform and close under that colonial, as 'ad 'is back turned to us, but certingly a lovely 'ead of 'air, as was parted werry even down the back, and 'ad a nice woice, and spoke that kind and tender, as Bishops always does, and asked sich nice easy words as anyone could spell, but 'owever he could let anyone begin a-spelliu' orkard a-w, I can't think; but it's my opinion as he pertended not to 'ear when parties was rong, so as not to turn 'em out, and as to the Lord in the chair, he were asleep best part of the time.

I'm sure the way as that Bishop kep' on a-lettin' parties spell rong was wonderful, aud made me stare agin, but he 'adn't the 'art to say anyone were rong, but kep' on a-sayin' as every oue might be right, and all as I've got to say if them parties as spelt the words as he give 'em are right, then I'm rong, and 'ave been all my life, and shall be to my

dyin' day; but jest fancy anyone a-spellin' ile, spile, and bile with a o, and kittle with a e, as would be kettle; why, you might as well spell skettles, skittles; and then leavin' out the y in Merryker, and makin' of it end with a a, and only one r, and not beginnin' of it with a M. As I said to Miss Ableths, no wonder the Merrykins turns up their noses at us, a-sayin' we don't know our own langwidge, if we spells like that.

I couldn't 'elp a-bustin' out a-larfin' when a party spelt 'ot 'air with a h, as made that Bishop turn round and say, "Silence, if you please, down there."

So I says, "By all means, my Lord, tho' it is 'ard work to keep from smilin' when you 'ears sich hignorance."

He didn't say nothink, but smiled, as I think bein' called my Lord 'ad pleased 'im. But jest then there was a party as 'ad been asked to spell 'ippercrit, as begun it with a h and a y, as made a party jump up and say as he were rong.

Says the Bishop, "He's right, my good friend."

I think the party as 'ad contradicted 'im were a little bit on, for he shook 'is fist in the hair and says, "I say as i-p spells 'ip all the world over. 'Ip, 'ip, 'ooray!"

I says, "'Ear, 'ear!"

"Order!" says the Bishop.

"Horder what you likes," says that other party, "I'll pay; I've 'ad my penshun to-day. Wot will you take, old lady?" he says, a-turnin' to me, "you're one of the right sort, you are?"

I says, "Nothink afore the Bishop."

"Let 'im drink fust, with all my heart," says he.

"Sit down," says the Bishop; "this is disgraceful."

"Well," I says, "I don't see that, as was well meant."

Says the Bishop to me, "I should be sorry to be obliged to 'ave you removed."

I says, "Wot for?"

He says, "I don't mean you, but do keep your 'usban' quiet."

I says, "My 'usban', indeed!"

"Wot will you 'ave to drink?" shouts that feller.

Up wakes the Lord in the chair and 'ammers wiolent on the table.

"Well," I says, "don't lose your temper over it, old gentleman, cos you'd better 'ave your nap out, as is aperiently one of them as is more pleasant when asleep than awake."

Says the Bishop, a-turnin' round—cos he'd been a-settin' on the hedge of the platform with 'is back

to us—"If you are not silent, my good woman, I must 'ave you removed."

"Who are you a-callin' a good woman?" says I, "as 'ad better look at 'ome for good women."

Cos I knowed as that would touch 'im up, cos he'd been and married a party as they do say were 'is 'ousemaid and as weren't wisited, leastways so Miss Ablett told me. That seemed to upset 'is Bishopship, for he 'ollered, in a woice like thunder, "Turn this noisy old woman out, as 'ave been a-drinkin'."

I says, "It's false."

Says the party as 'ad spelt i-p, "She shan't be turned out; you're a-persecutin' 'er because she won't let that ignorant feller with 'is h-y have the day."

"Who are you a-callin' hignorant?" says the other party on the platform.

"You, to be sure," says the one down below, "and say much more I'll come up and pull your nose."

"'Ush!" says the Bishop. "This is disgraceful."

"Order! chair!" says the live Lord, who were quite alive.

Jest then the party as 'ad stuck up for me come next me and tried for to jump on the platform by means of ketchin' 'old of the Bishop's chair, but

missed 'is tip, as the sayin' is, and ketched 'old of the Bishop's leg to save 'isself by, and that feller on the platform he made a rush forard to push 'im back, when away they come, Bishop and all, slap down jest afore me and Miss Ableits, as in tryin' to save the Bishop 'ad a bad fall 'erself, and reglar swep me down under the seat thro' a-clingin' to me. Jest then if they didn't take and turn off the gas. I never did 'ear sich screams and noise, every one a-rushin' to the door, as would 'ave reglar took and trampled me to death, only I'd been and crep under the seat. No Bedlam broke loose in this world wasn't nothink to the riot as there were a-ragin' for ever so long, and when some one come in and lit the gas agin, the place was pretty nigh empty, tho' there was a nice sight of 'ats and umbrellers all over the place, and one of them two as 'ad quarrelled over 'ippercrit 'ad got the other by the throat, and was both a-kneelin' on the Bishop, as 'is wife as were close agin me were a-shriekin' to know whether he were dead.

I says to 'er, a-gettin' up slow, "Oh, he ain't 'urt, for most on 'im is under the platform, so they was only on 'is legs."

She says, "You disgraceful old creetur, you're the cause of all the riot. I'll give you in charge."

"Wot for?" I says. "For tellin' you as your

'usbin's safe? I suppose you're disappinted cos you thought you'd got a chance of another."

Well, by that time they'd parted them two fellers, and the Bishop 'ad been 'elped up, as said as he wouldn't press the charge agin me.

I says, "Wot charge? I ain't afeard of no Bishop's charges as is sure to mean nothink."

"You're a werry mischeevous party," says the Bishop, "as is fond of your lark."

I said, "No thoughts of no larks ever entered my 'ead, as it's a mussy as I've got it safe on my shoulder; and I should advise you next time as you 'olds a spellin' bee not to sit so near the hedge of the platform, and to 'ave your dixonary open afore you."

He didn't say no more, but 'urried out of the place, and as I couldn't see nothink of Miss Abletts I follered, a-makin' the best of my way 'ome, and there was Miss Abletts a-settin' with 'er bonnet on, as said, "I fully expected, Mrs. Brown, to be fetched to the stashun-'ouse for you."

I says, "Wotever for? You couldn't 'ave bailed me out, thro' not bein' a 'ousekeeper," I says. "Well," I says, "I've done with them spellin' bees, and Bishops too, for of all the hignorance as ever I did sit and listen to, that there Bishop is the wust, and as to that fieldmale as he picked up in Afrika, for call 'er 'is good lady I will not, she ain't

no more manners than a 'Ottentot Wenus, as I've 'eard a uncle of mine talk about, as were showed in London a good many years as a specimint of black booty, as 'ad been kidnapped from somewheres over there in a state of natur, and would fly at parties as was only a-lookin' at 'er, as the man as showed 'er 'ad to keep 'er in order with a cane, as 'er black skin didn't show no wales."

Says Miss Abletts, "I certingly will never go anywheres with you agin, Mrs. Brown, as might 'ave been the death of somebody, thro' bein' that dredful excited, and did make the Bishop's nose bleed."

I says, "I never touched the man, as it's a mussy as he didn't come a cropper backards on me, as would 'ave smashed me, chair and all; but I never can set by and not see fair play, as I'd stick up for, if I were a-settin' next Queen Wictorier on 'er throne."

"Well," says Miss Abletts, "I'm glad you're safe 'ome, so I'll go and take my bonnet off."

I says, "Do so, and we'll 'ave supper, for I'm reglar worn out and starvin' for my beer, as it's a mussy there's two bottles in the 'ouse." So 'er and me set down to supper, as were a cold pie and bottled stout, and arter that we sat a-chattin' over spellin' and all manner, for I were expectin' Brown 'ome, tho' not a-settin' up for 'im, thro' it's

bein' uncertin' wot train he'd come by; but said as he would come if it were the guard's wan of a luggage train, tho' I said to 'im, "I do 'ope you won't, for I never shan't forget wot 'appened to me a-comin' up from Tunbridge, as were nearly my death, thro' bein' that werry wintery weather as we 'ad three winters back, just as that last frost we 'ad took and broke up. For I'd went down to Tunbridge to see a werry old friend of mine, as lives there along with 'er son, as is engaged on the railway, and a nice little 'ouse close agin the stashun. She'd been and sent me word as she were werry ill, poor soul, but found when I got there, as 'ad turned the corner, as I told 'er son as with care she'd pull thro', as were not to say old, tho' a-gettin' on for elderly, and gall stones, tho' painful, ain't death as a rule. I went off early in the day, and got there in time for dinner, and was a-thinkin' wot would my dear mother and father both 'ave said if they could 'ave lived to 'ave seen the day as Tunbridge were only a 'our from Cherrin' Cross. Well, me and my old friend 'ad a 'appy day, as I've known over forty years, as were born Ann Ingleton, but twice married, once in the name of Prillin, and then to a party named Ogdin, with the son as she lives with bein' by the fust, and a widderer with one gal, as is deformed, tho' 'er father only calls it a stoop, as is only natral in parentle blindness, and he'd got a

frightful squint 'isself, tho' a pleasant spoken man, and be'aves well to 'is mother. We talked of all manner as we remembered when gals, as was Queen Caroline a-comin' to London, with the winders all broke in Parlymint Street, by the mob as sided with 'er, and then the row there was when she were berried with the Cater Street Conspiracy, as 'er father did used to know all about, thro' livin' close agin the Hedgeware Road, and see all them fellers brought out of the loft, where they was a-goin' to murder every minister from 'er father's back door, as was 'ung, drored, and quartered for their pains, the willins, as she remembered many things more clearer than me, thro' bein' three years older, as makes a difference, cos she remembered long afore gas come in; also the Mar's Murder, as I've only 'eard a aunt of mine talk about, thro' it a-appenin' on a Saturday night, two years afore I were born, and she could remember the Princess Charlotte a-dyin', as made every one shed tears, and 'ow they larfed at the notion of steam-boats when they fust come out; and as to railways, they wasn't never thought on, and parties said as the gas would blow up London, and as to 'avin' it in 'ouses, they'd as soon let a-ragin' lion inside their doors, and if they was to 'ave seen a lucifer go off, they'd 'ave thought as it were the devil let loose.

So wot with talkin' over them things, and all 'er

own sorrers, for we 'adn't met but twice since she berried 'er last, the day took and slipped away like nothink.

Well, nothink wouldn't pacify my old friend, as I must stop till the last train, as she said I must stop and see 'er son; and she were sure ten o'clock up to town were the last; and we was that 'appy, and she did seem so cheered up at seein' me, that tho' I a'd to talk to 'er thro' a speakin' trumpet, to make 'er 'ear, yet I didn't like to leave; and she says, you must stop and see my Sam, as will be 'ome to supper at 'arf-past eight; and as I 'adn't seen 'im since he were eleven, I wished so to do, and I must say, when he come in, he were a fine growed man, tho' grimy, and that glad to see me, and says—

"I 'opes you're come to stop a day or two along with mother."

"No," I says, "I must be 'ome to-night, thro' espectin' my good gentleman."

He says, "You can't go to-night; there's no train!"

I says, "Why, your mother told me the last was at ten."

He says, "That's of a Thursday;" and this were Wednesday.

I says, "Go I must, if I walks, for Brown's a-goin' off agin by ten o'clock to-morrer, all up to the north."

His mother says to 'im arter supper, "Sam, you'll see Mrs. Brown into the train, won't you?" for in course we didn't say nothink to 'er about the train not a-goin', cos she'd 'ave worreted.

"All right, mother," he says, "I'll manage it," and give me the wink, and I puts on my things, and arter sayin' "Good-bye," and promisin' as I'd come agin soon and see 'er, me and Sam started for the train.

When he was got out, he says, "There's jest a chance to get you up to town if the goods train ain't gone thro', and if it ain't, I know the guard will take you in 'is wan."

I says, "That'll do capital," little knowin' wot I were in for.

It were a drizzly rain, and werry cold thaw; so arter waitin' a good bit at the stashun, as were all shet up, I felt chilly like, while Sam Prillin were a-enquirin' about that goods train. As luck would 'ave it, it 'adn't gone thro', tho' I must say my 'art misgive me when I were 'oisted up into that guard's wan, as didn't draw up to the platform, and as much as I could do to get my leg up. Not espectin' to 'ave stopped so late, I 'adn't brought nothink with me in the way of refreshments, and, goodness knows, I'd 'ad plenty of everythink with my old friend, as is werry comfortable off, and don't want 'er son to foller the engine; but he will do it, for he says as it distracts 'im, and reglar doats on

it, partickler since he berried 'is wife, as werry nigh broke 'is 'art, as 'is mother told me, poor feller; but I only says to myself, "Ah! that's all werry fine; but 'arts is tuff things!" and 'eard yesterday as he's a-goin' to marry agin.

I must say as that guard's wan is werry like a 'oss box, and tho' he were a werry civil-spoken man, 'ad only got a sack to lay on the top of a locker for me to set on. I never could 'ave believed as anythink could joggle about as wiolent as that wan, and not do nobody no 'arm, for it nearly shook me to death, partickler in stoppin', when all them 'eavy trucks seemed to crush up together, and seemed as if they must be broke to bits by their own weight, and sich a noise as was distractin'

I got into that wan about ten, and I asks the young man wot time we should be at Cherrin' Cross.

"Oh!" he says, "we don't go there, but to the Bricklayers' Arms."

"Oh!" I says, "that's close agin the Kent Road, as I shall be sure to get a bus."

"Well," he says, "if we're in luck, I 'ope we may be there by 'arf-past twelve o'clock."

"Wot!" I says; "over two 'ours?"

He says, "It may be later, all depends on wot we've got afore us; and I'm sure I 'ope it won't, for I wants to get to bed, for I'm 'arf asleep now."

He didn't say much more, for he'd a deal of ritin' to do on a desk up in a corner, and kep' a-lookin' out at the door every now and then, while I were a-noddin' on that locker, as were too 'igh for me to set on reglar; when all of a sudden we stopped with that shock as sent me flyin' forard right across the wan, and should 'ave fell out at the door but for the guard a-ketchin' me.

I says, "Wotever is it?"

He says, "Oh! we're only stopped, as may be kep' 'ere two 'ours, for the Brighton goods is afore us."

I were not sorry for to 'ear it, cos there were a barrel in that guard's wan as 'ad got loose and were a-rolliu' about that unpleasant, as I were afraid would roll over my feet, as is my tender pint. It 'ad turned werry cold and foggy, and then we stopped ever so long a-'earin' whistles with trains a-passin' by, and we wasn't near no platform, so as I could get out, cos the guard said as I mightn't get down on the line, for fear as trains should come by and run over me. So there I set a-tremblin' for fear as there might be a collusion, as I spoke about to that guard, as made werry light on it, thro' bein' that used to 'em, as in course he didn't think nothink on any more than a butcher of a slorter-'ouse.

I couldn't 'ardly keep my eyes open, and were

a-noddin' away a-settin' on that barrel for to keep it steady, as was lower than the locker, besides my weight, when all of a suddin there come sich a jolt and crash, as were the train a-startin' off agin, and away went that barrel with that force as rolled me afore it, and if the guard 'adn't put 'is 'ead in, would 'ave rolled me to death. He took and turned it up on its 'ead, as stopped its little game, and then picked me up; and on we went for about another 'arf-'our, and then we stopped short, and he says to me, "'Ere we are at the Bricklayers' Arms."

When I come to look out at the door of that wan, I were nearly six feet from the ground, with no steps nor nothink to 'elp me to get down by, and I says to the guard, "I can't jump."

"Oh!" he says, "we can lower you with the crane."

I says, "Go along with you! I'd rather pay to 'ave a pair of steps fetched."

He says, "It's only my fun; we'll get you down safe enuf."

So he called to some men as 'ad bull's-eyes in their 'ands, as managed for to ketch 'old of my ankles, as guided my feet on to the wheels; and down I goes, and glad I was to be on the level ground agin. It were a goods station full of trucks and trains, but any'ow I were glad to be in London, so I gave the guard a couple of shillins for 'im and

the others, as showed me thro' a gate, and said as the Kent Road were straight ahead.

Well, I walked on thro' black mud and slosh, and lots of rows of 'ouses as was all shet up, and not a perliceman about, with a drizzlin' rain, and not a westment of a cab or bus. I think as I must 'ave walked about nearly 'arf a 'our, and it were one o'clock when I got to the Bricklayers' Arms, so I says, "I shall 'ave to set on the kerb-stone till daylight," when, as luck would 'ave it, up come a 'ansome cab, as must 'ave lost 'is way, or else he wouldn't never 'ave come down them back slums, as said as he'd take me as far as Algit, and then I could get another, and so I did, as took me 'ome; and there was Brown a-settin' up, with the kittle on the bile, and a bit of cold meat, as I did relish when I'd been and changed my boots; and as to my clothes, they was all bedaubed with black and railway grease, as I 'ad to send to the scourers; and never got to bed till past three, and Brown didn't find no fault, but only said, "Next time as you goes out by rail, old gal, get some one to look to the time-bill for you, cos there ain't no trustin' to wot parties tells you about trains, as never ain't to be trusted."

Says Miss Abletts, "You 'ave wonderful narrer escapes, Mrs. Brown, both by land and water, and I am glad, I must say, as you don't live in the Bow

Road now, for I couldn't never live out there, and I'm sure I'm werry comfortable with you; but I shall now go to bed, and don't suppose as Mr. Brown will be 'ome to-night."

I says, "I begins to think as it's doubtful myself, so shall go and get ready for bed; and if he should come in soon I can come out in my shawl and night-cap; and if he ain't werry late the fire won't be out, as will last for a 'our or so, as I shall take and throw up the cinders and damp them down, as is why I likes peat, as will keep the fire in for ever so long, and burn up in a minnit with a bit of wood and a few coals jest sprinkled on the top."

So off to bed I went, but set a-waitin' ever so long, and at last, when I did get to bed, I wasn't sleepy, and in come Miss Abletts with 'er bonnet on, and says, "Are you ready?"

I says, "Wot for?"

She says, "Queen Wictorier's spellin' bee, as she's a-goin' to 'old in the Halbert 'All for the benefit of the London 'Ospital, as the new wing on 'ave been run down by the Germins."

"Ah," I says, "there's lots of Germins, as is mostly sugar-bakers out that way, as 'ad a church there, as fell in jest like the Brunswick Theayter, as nobody wasn't 'urt in but Macbeth, as were murdered by some Macduffer, and a negro black in the name of Othello as took and smothered 'is wife in the ruins

thro' jealousy, as is like old Beastmark, as is that jealous of our gettin' all them Sewers Canals into our 'ands, as he says did ought to be common sewers for everybody, but Gladstin says is a-drainin' the country, and so did Old Lowe, as always were fond of the country, and that's 'ow he come to smash that fishmonger, thro' a-'nockin' 'im over Kingston Bridge with 'is bisicle, as he were always a-goin' about on, as I'd sooner walk myself, not as I can go out this figger."

"You never looked nicer in your life," says Miss Ablett, as wasn't Miss Ablett no more, but Queen Wictorier 'erself in all 'er royal robes, as says to me, "Come along, Martha. Why, what a lovely becomin' night-cap you 'ave got on, as I wish you'd give me the pattern on, and then there wouldn't be no fear of my settin' on my strings no more. As certingly Beetriss is werry clever in settlin' for me, and a deal better than my lady 'elp, as wants some one to wait on 'er besides 'er carridge airin' of a day, and won't stay more than a week or two, a-sayin' as there's one duchess or another a-comin' to look arter my robes, as is that 'ot I can't abear the sight on, and there's no walkin' under."

"Ah," I says, "that's jest like my welweteen cape, as is wadded thro', and nearly sweltered me to death last week, when I were in the Park a-waitin' to see your grashus Majesty go by."

"I saw you," says she, "and well you looked, tho' you give me a turn, for I thought at fust as you was in weeds."

"Ah," I says, "that's all owin' to my new 'ead of 'air, as is my combin's saved, and looks a deal lighter than it did, cos I never will dye, not as long as I lives."

"And right you are, Martha," says Disreely, as come up to me all of a 'urry, and says, "I can't get into the 'ouse, there's sich a mob, so I'm a-goin' to the spellin' bee."

He busts out a-larfin' and says, "Look at that old Slyboots, and pints to a tree as old Gladstin were a-sittin' under a-readin' of a spellin' book, and a-wettin' of 'is thumb for to turn over the leaves more easy.

I says, "That's a nasty 'abit, and spiles a book, the same as I can't abear to see any one do it not in dealin' of the cards."

"Don't talk of cards," says Dr. Cummin', a-turnin' round, "cos you'll give my dear friend, Cardnal Mannin', pain if he 'ears you."

"Ah," I says, "he's got a fine 'and, he 'ave, and will win the trick, tho' you do 'old more 'oners than 'im."

"Do be quiet down there, you old woman," says Wolly, a-lookin' over the platform, where I see Queen Wictorier a-settin' with all 'er royal family

round 'er all of a group, jest like Madame Tussor's waxwork.

"Silence!" says the Queen, a-'ittin' of the table. And now, Mrs. Brown, 'ow do you spell brandy in three letters?"

I says, "I knows in French as it's O D Wee; and 'ave 'eard as it can be maniged with three in Inglish; but it's a ketch."

"Bar, sells," says Disreely.

Says Gladstin, "Then 'ow come you to buy up them sewers?"

"Ah!" says Lowe, "anser that, as is more than I'd 'ave let you do."

"Out!" says Queen Wictorier, "don't you come 'ere a-botherin'; this ain't rithmetic, it's spellin'."

Says Gladstin, a-lookin' at me, "spell Halfer."

I says, "H-a-l——"

Says Queen Wictorier, "That ain't fair, that's Greek."

"Not a bit on it," I says; "it's a road up St. John's Wood."

"Do you understand 'Omer?" says Gladstin.

I says, "I knows Omer Row, as is close agin the Hedgeware Road, as is where the Cater Street conspiracy did used to be, as Mrs. Ogdin can tell you all about"

"Ah!" says Wolly, "it's a intreeg with Rome,

and we'll take and inspect all the nunneries, won't we, Noodlegate?"

"I think as Dr. Pusey might as well 'ave asked me the way to Rome," says Cardnal Mannin' to Spurgin, as was a-settin' next 'im, "and not go a-troublin' them French bishops, cos I knows the way as well as them, tho' I were not brought up to it; and I'm sure I've showed scores the way, only by jest a-tellin' 'em to follar me."

"Order!" says Queen Wictorier, "you ain't a-mindin' your spellin' a bit. I've been a-askin' you 'ow to spell hempriss ever so long, and you all begun it with a e; and left out the h in Injier, and spells Wictorier with a Wee, as is Scotch for small, as is a langwidge as I doats on, cos I loves the people as my 'art's in the Ighlands."

I says, "To 'ear Queen Wictorier speak, you'd dcclare it was me, for them's my sentiments."

"Oh! Martha, old friend, I do wish as you'd come and stay along with me at Winsor," says Queen Wictorier, "for I am that lonesome, as is wot 'ave made me take to bees, as is werry slow work arter all."

I says, "I should be werry 'appy, only I don't think as Brown would like it."

She says "Who's Brown, indeed? he's only a servint!"

I says, "Escuse me, but I were not illudin' to John Brown, but my own Brown; cos I knows werry well wot John Brown is, thro' a-knowin' them Ighlands, as isn't the man to forget 'is place and be too forard; and if he did, why, your grashus ways would soon set 'im down, for a look from you is wot every one wants."

"Oh!" she says, "I'm not goin' to stop in so much as I did, for I feel that interested in edication and everythink else."

"Well, then," I says, "why not 'ave understandin' bees as well as spellin' ones, for I'm sure there's lots of parties, like Miss Pilkinton, as uses words as they don't understand the meaning on; and," I says, "wouldn't it be a great thing for all, specially forriners, if they knowed wot they was a-talkin' about; and as all looks up to you and would take the word from you, and learn Inglish werry quick that way, as some on 'em forrin potentates wont like you a-wisitin' Germiny, tho' some will rejoice, for in course the werry thought as you're comin' and the name of you is enuf for to make tyrants tremble, like Beastmark," I says in a whisper, "let alone any one as was too free, and dared to take a liberty."

"'Ow do you spell liberty, Prince Beastmark?" says Queen Wictorier, in a woice of thunder, "and wot's the meanin' on it?"

Them words made the Hemperor of Roosher jump agin, for he was a-settin' next to Beastmark, a-whisperin' to 'im.

"Please, your Majesty," says Beastmark, "I don't know sich a word; it ain't known nowhere in the part as I come from."

"It will be some day," says Queen Wictorier to me, with a wink and a smile on 'er eldest dorter, as stood near 'er royal ma, as is a noble, kind-'arted creetur, with a fine family about 'er, as'll cook old Beastmark's goose some fine day, and preaps when he least espects it.

"Spell right," says Queen Wictorier, to a party as were a-settin' down in front on 'er, and was a starin' werry 'ard, in spectacles, as 'ad been forcin' 'is way in thro' the crowd with a great row at the door.

"I don't know wot it means," says he.

"Bravo, Kenealy! I thought you didn't know it from rong," says Disreely, with a sneer," and you can't be 'eard no more." So he says, "Shet up."

"I will be 'eard," says the other, "or Manner Charter——"

But jest then John Bright and one or two more went up to 'im, and said as they'd 'elped 'im into the 'ouse, but as they'd 'ave 'im out like a knife if he didn't be'ave 'isself.

Jest then Gladstin comes and sets down by me

and says, "Wot's your opinion of this 'ere Berriel Bill, Mrs. Brown?"

"Well," I says, "my good gentleman, as reads all the papers over it, says as he don't see why them as is Dissenters should want the churchyard without the parsin, as might as well want the pulpit."

"Oh! yes," he says, "that's right enuf; but," he says, "I'm up a tree, and certingly I should like to get Old Dizzy into a ole."

"Well," I says, "it seems to me as the days is a-comin' when there won't be no religion at all, cos if everyone may be right and nobody ain't wrong, wotever is the use of makin' a bother over it; leastways, that's wot Brown says; but," I says to 'im, "if you've got to read about all the different religions for to find out which is the right one, why, you've got your work cut out, and," I says, "as to you you're always a-dodgin' the Pope, or a-sidin' with Bradlar, and will be a-goin' in for Kenealy some day, so they won't know wot religion to berry you."

"Well," he says, "I'm reglar puzzled to know wot will wash; so I rites wot I can one day, and says wot I likes another."

"Well," I says, "you'll come a-cropper some day, twixt two schools you'll come to the ground, as the sayin' is."

He says, "If I change so does Dizzy, as were a Radical once 'isself, so he needn't talk; and as to religion——"

"Will you shet up, William Ewit," says Queen Wictorier, "and wait till I asks you 'ow you spells hoffice."

He begun o, and there was lots as cried O, O, "Out," "Out," and so he were glad to get away, leastways Dizzy come and slipped into 'is place, and says to me, "Mrs. Brown, I'm glad to see you ere, and will you jest keep my place for me, cos I've left my 'andkercher full of Sewers Canals in my top coat."

I says, "All right, nobody shan't take it."

Says a party settin' next to me the other side, as said he had been returned from Chelsea, "'Ow do you spell corporashun, Mrs. Brown?"

I says, "A werry wulgar word to ask a lady, and if you says it agin I'll tell Queen Wictorier of you."

"Wot's the matter with you, Martha?" said 'er Majesty, a-lookin' up from 'er dixonary, "if they annoys you down there you come and sit next me, and you shall ask 'em all the words."

So I sets down by 'er, and I says, "Whoever is that party as is askin' about corporashuns, and sayin' as he wants a Republic."

She says, "I don't know."

"I 'eard some one call 'im Dilke," I says.

"Indeed!" says Queen Wictorier, "Dilke," she says, and seemed a-thinkin', "I've 'eard the name, and I think 'im or 'is family was one of my penshuners, or somethink like that, or 'is father was a old servint."

"Oh!" I says, "no doubt a Chelsea penshuner, a place as he were talkin' about, as 'ad better 'old 'is tung, for it 'ave been done away with for its abuses, and it was one of the wust places for the langwidge as I've 'eard myself from them old penshuners along by the wall of the 'ospital, and Turk's Row, was enuf to ave turned your blood."

"Yes," says Queen Wictorier, "and I 'ave 'ad 'em all done away with for a noosance."

So I says, "It don't become 'im as 'ave wore the Queen's livery to talk about republics, as is 'ow them Yankee Doodle rebels begun their pranks, but it's a mussy as we got rid on 'em, for wotever title would you 'ave 'ad to take to please 'em; when you must call yourself a hempress jest to please them fiery Injins, as Dilke will be a-tryin' to persuade to be republicans on their own 'ooks."

Says Queen Wictorier, a-smilin', "Well, if it pleases 'im it don't 'urt me; but," she says, "this won't never do; why, we've stuck some'ow in our spellin'."

Jest then there was sich a row down below, and some one a-sayin', "Who shoved you?"

"Why, you did," says another; "I'll punch your 'ead, and if it 'adn't been for spilin' my clothes, as would tear easy, I'd 'ave shoved you agin."

So I looks, and there was Disreely and Gladstin 'avin' words about a-gettin' in to 'ear Parlymint opened, as Gladstin said he'd seen scores of times, and didn't care about, and then said as Disreely 'ad got 'im out of 'is place, as he'd been a-standin' ever so long afore. "But," says Gladstin, "I'll 'ave you out again some day."

"You won't get me out in a 'urry,' says Disreely. "I shall put on my coat and 'at, and go out, for they're as good as new, and a deal too good for a crowd, and that's why I went off the other day, for I didn't want to see the show, as I considers as big a bore as Queen Wictorier does."

I says, "It ain't as Queen Wictorier considers it no bore, but she's sometimes got a bad sick 'eadache, as I'm a-goin' to give 'er two of my pills to take overnight for, as will set 'er right in a jiffey."

"I am a-lookin' forard to seein' my dear boy 'ome agin," says Queen Wictorier, "as 'ave been 'avin' of a good spell over there, as I only 'opes he won't 'ave been and forgot 'is Inglish ways."

I says, "In course he ain't."

"Cos," she says, "I can't 'ave 'im ridin' hele-

fants all over the place, nor shootin' tigers in the Park."

I says, "What lots of shawls, and pickles, and sweetmeats, and helefants' teeth, and tigers' skins, and ivory chestmen, and musling, and jewels he will bring you 'ome, to be sure, let alone pickled mangoes and curry powder, not as I likes their curries as I've tasted, and I've 'eard a young man say as I knows well, as 'ave just been over there and back agin for a lark, he told me as they didn't know 'ow to make a curry; but I do 'ope as the Prince won't bring 'ome everythink a-smellin' of patcherly, nor yet musk, as is werry stiflin', and I ain't foud of too much hotter of roses myself, as is a sickly smell, I considers."

"So it is," says she, "partikler when used for to 'ide the smell of baccy or inions, and that's why I can't abear old Beastmark near me, as covers 'is garlic under baccy smoke, not as that Shar were no treat, with 'is musky smells."

"Ah," I says, "a many of them forriners is best to meet in the open hair, and I shouldn't care to be twelve inside a bus with them Injin Princes myself, but," I says, "Halbert Hedward he's able to bear anythink."

"Yes," says Queen Wictorier, "that illness as he 'ad reglar set 'im up, and you did 'im a world of good by sendiu' them things as you did, as I'd 'ave

'ad to nuss 'im if I'd 'ave knowed you'd 'ave liked to 'ave come. But," she says, "let bygones be bygones, as the sayin' is, and certingly 'is 'ealth even now is werry much the better over there for takin' your adwice as you give 'im, my dear old friend, let alone them pills."

"Ah," I says, "they'd do for all climits, your most grashus Majesty, as you might give 'em to Iceland's rocky mountains and India's coral shores, as the sayin' is, like the stars as rolls from Poles to Poles; and another thing as I've 'eard as he's been a-gettin' up early in the mornin', as is a fine thing, partikler in 'ot weather, but he must be strong for to 'ave went thro' all them helefants and tigers, let alone them pigs and the native Princes, as I've 'eard say is all werry 'appy and satisfied as long as you lets 'em 'ave guns enuf, but cut 'em off a gun, and they're miserable, tho' I should say as they'd 'ad enuf of guns, as they was fired from pretty free one time, but I suppose they've got used to it."

"Ah," says Queen Wictorier, "them was orful days, but, thank goodness, they're over, and now them Injins don't seem to know 'ow to knock under enuf to me, as is now a-wantin' me to be a Hempress, as I don't seem to see it, for Queen of Ingland is all I cares about."

"Right you are," I says, "for it's a glorious title, and I'm sure when you see wot tin-pot Hempresses

there 'as been all about, nobody wouldn't care about bein' one, for that there Hempress of Germiny ain't much to look at, tho' in course she didn't make 'erself, so can't elp it. But," I says, "it is glorious news the way as that boy of ourn—for tho' he is a father of a family, he'll always be a boy to us—'ave been treated, and all as I'm afraid on is as them Injins will want to keep 'im."

"Yes," she says, "they've been and made a reglar idol on 'im."

I says, "Law, I 'opes not, and stuck 'im up in one of them temples, cos I've seen them images as they wusships, and I'm sure a idol life wouldn't never suit 'im; besides, if they dresses 'im up like one of them hijeous Jemmygods, we shan't know 'is good-lookin' face when he comes back."

Says the Archbishop of Canterberry, "Oh, Duckwuth will look arter that."

"Oh," I says, "my Lord Archbishop, I am glad for to see you, cos you can tell me what's a-goin' to be done with them 'eathens, now as there ain't no devil."

He says, "'Ow the devil should I know. Parlymint must settle that."

"Ah, I always said you wasn't no use," says Dr. Cummin'. "Jest you come and 'ear me, Martha, my dear, and I'll tell you all about that, and a deal more, at my little place near Drury Lane."

Says Queen Wictorier, "Please for to remember I'm the 'ead of the Church, tho' I don't like long sermins."

"And," I says, "when I goes to Drury Lane it won't be to 'ear a sermin, but to see that there wonderful family as dances there so lovely, and 'owever that young man can take and throw 'is leg over 'is sister's 'ead like that I can't think, as is a werry united family a-goin' all over the world together, a-singin' and a-dancin' that 'appy, tho' it must be 'ard on the old Fokes at 'ome to part with them, as is a family to be proud on, and fond on too; and," I says, "next time as you addresses me, Dr. Cummin', don't make that free with my name, cos I don't 'old with no free ways, not even from the Lord Mare, nor yet Cardnal Mannin', as I should keep in their places if they come a-bein' too familiar; and as to your sermins, I've 'eard say as they're all werry well for them as likes 'em, but, for my part, a little on goes a long way with me."

Says Queen Wictorier, "What a dear old toad you are to talk, Martha; but if I keeps on a-gossipiu' like this to you, I shan't never be in time for the train to Germiny, for I ain't goin' to 'ave no more 'urryin' and seurryin', for I'm sure I never shan't forget to my dyin' day that 'Misseltoe'; and then to tell me as they got in the way thro' a-wantin' to stare at me, when they was a-'avin' of

their teas, poor things; but that's the wust of bein' a Queen, you can't be everywhere at once, to look arter everybody, as is wot you did ought to be."

I says, "I do 'ope as you won't go to Germiny much thro' France, cos now them raddycals 'ave been and carried the day, there's no knowin' wot they won't do with kings and queens if they gets 'old on 'em."

She didn't say nothink at fust, didn't Queen Wictorier, but arter a bit she says, "I'm goin' 'ome now, Mrs. Brown, and you must take my place, and ask all the questions."

I says, "I can't ask them parsons no questions, cos they've all got different dixonaries, as they ansers out on, and won't listen to none but their own way of spellin', and," I says, "for my part I'd let 'em alone, and that's wot I says, let everyone spell as he likes, cos you'll only 'ave a row if you tries to make them all agree, as ain't worth while, I should say, cos Inglishmen g'ories in doin' wot they likes, tho' in course they've got that sense as to know as there must be some rules somewheres, but not in spellin' bees, as depends a deal on the fancy."

"I think as you might as well make room for me," says a woice as I thought were Brown's, but weren't sure, so I says, "Queen Wictorier is jest a-goin', and if the others would set up a little

'igher." and then I 'eard Brown's larf as he got into bed, and says, "At your old games, eh, Martha? dreamin' agin?"

I says, "Well, Brown, if anyone but you 'ad told me it was dreams, I should 'ave give 'em the false'ood straight, but," I says, "wot's o'clock?"

"Oh!" he says, "jest on one."

I says, "Don't you want no supper nor nothink?"

He says, "Oh dear, no! I've 'ad my pipe and a drop of grog since I come in, cos there was a nice bit of fire as you left, so now good-night, for I'm dead tired;" and off he went like a church, but I couldn't get to sleep for a good bit, all thro' my 'ead bein' that full of that there spellin' bee of Queen Wictorier's, as did seem that real as I could 'ave swore to it every word, if I 'ad to lay down my 'ead on the block like Lady Jane Grey, poor thing; not as ever I should try to get anyone's crown like 'er, for in my opinion it's jolly dismal work bein' a king or queen, as parties is afraid to speak to, and dursn't give their opinions afore, as I've 'eard say 'as werry often to 'ave dreadful mumchance dinners with them bishops and their ladies; as ain't as bad as the Pope, as never 'as nobody to dinner, but obligated to 'ave it all by 'isself for fear of bein' pisoned, as looks greedy and must be orful solintary, not as he cares much, but don't in my opinion

lead that there jolly life as there's a song about 'im a-doin' jest like the monks of old; as I'm sure there was monks down at Ramsgit as we was a-lodgin' close by last summer, and they didn't prove no jovial crew, as didn't neither larf nor yet quarf, cos I knowed a little boy as were at school there, as I went to see, and if that's a jovial life, why, I'd rather not lead it, that's all."

Miss Abletts she were all agog one mornin', thro' a-seein' as all the swells was 'avin' spellin' bees, and said as one party, as she knowed as were livin' a 'igh fam'ly 'ad told 'er as at all the swell dinners they was 'avin' spellin' all the time, as I don't consider manners myself, as there's a many as might cut a bad figger over it, tho' in course you might keep your mouth full constant, so as not to anser, not as I should care, cos I considers as every one did ought to spell as they pleases.

Says Miss Abletts, "Then wotever's the use of schoolin' or books?"

"Well," I says, "I never 'ad none, and don't seem to miss it, for I've see them as was edicated up to their eyes and didn't never do good, and 'ave to come and beg of them as didn't never go to even the parochial school; as I remembers when a gal a-seein' a-settin' each side of the orgin in Limus Church a-singin' the Easter 'Imm, as a aunt of mine as lived in Popler did used to be werry fond

on, and I stopped along with 'er a good deal when a child, thro' my mother a-wantin' me sometimes out of the way."

But, law bless me, there was parties in the name of Krimling as lived in a large 'ouse down Leighton way, as was all at boardin' school, with their saddle 'orses, as come down in the world, leastways the eldest son, as made a low sort of a marridge, tho' I'm sure she were too good for 'im, a idle beast, and were livin' close to us in Stepney, with three children, as 'adn't a bit of shoe to their foot, and many a time without bread, if Mr. Corney, the baker, 'adn't let 'em 'ave a loaf, and that beast a-comin' 'ome drunk all 'ours of the night, and a-ritin' beggin' letters, as 'ad been at school along with bishops and judges, as 'elped 'im, and so did 'is own father's coachman's son, as 'ad a fine business in the ile and colour line over in the Burrer. My aunt she'd washed for 'em, and said as the old man wore cambric shirts, and in genral two a-day, with frills, as he left 'is dimon brooch in more than once, as it's lucky it fell in 'onest 'ands. But he were a old waggerbone, and a nice lot 'is children turned out, as he did used to wimper and cry about, when he was quite a old feller, without 'ardly a coat to 'is back, and a pound a-week to live on, as a cousin allowed 'm, tho' no call to, for he'd be'aved shameful to all 'is relations.

The old man lived with 'is son at Stepney, and when I fust 'eard the name I thought as I remembered it; but found out who they was thro' a-goin' in once when that poor Mrs. Krimling were give over with 'er last, as were a-sinkin', poor thing, and must 'ave died but for the things as was give 'er out of charity. So arter that we did used to speak, and onee I went in when 'er little one scalded 'erself frightful, thro' a-pullin' of the kittle over, a-tryin' to drink out of the spout, with 'er old beast of a grandfather a-settin' by the fire all the while, a selfish old wretch, as led 'em all sich a life, and as I 'ad to save 'is son from strikin' 'im over the 'ead with the tongs one day thro' bein' in licker.

Oh, they was a niee bilin' of greens, as the sayin' is, as was a noosanee to theirselves and every one else down both sides of the way. It were one Friday—no, I tell a story, it were a Thursday evenin'—as jest atween the lights, Mrs. Krimling eome in, and without no bonnet nor shawl, and says to me—

"Oh! Mrs. Brown. Krimling 'ave been and pisoned 'isself!"

I were jest a-goin' to say no sieh luek, when I see by 'er faee as there was summut serous, for she were deadly pale as hashes.

She says, "Pray, eome! He've been a-threat-

enin' to do it for the last month, and now he's been and took it."

I says, "Took wot?"

"Why," she says, "a white powder out of blue paper in a tooth mug in our bedroom."

"So," I says, "'ave you sent for a doctor?"

"Yes," she says; "but do come in."

I says, "Is he dead?"

"Oh!" she says, "he will be by the time I gets back, so do come."

Well, I jest slipped on my bonnet and shawl, as it's only just at the back of us, and went along with 'er. She 'urries upstairs and I follers 'er into the bed-room, and there set my gentleman in a old easy-chair, no more pisoned than I was. So I says to 'im, "Wot 'ave you been and took?"

He only shook 'is 'ead and moaned.

I says to 'er, "Get me some 'ot water, and a quarter of a pound of mustard," and give 'er a shillin'.

He shook 'is 'ead more wiolent when he 'eard that, and then he says, in a sort of a whisper, "Too late, too late, I were drove to it;" and he smelt of sperrits enuf to knock you down; and jest then in come the doctor, as 'ad brought a stretcher and four men for to take 'im to the infirmary. He didn't know wot they was a-goin' to do with 'im when they said to 'im, "Come downstairs," and

took 'im by the arms, and he really were that stupefied with drink as he didn't know what he was a-doin'. His poor wife she took and fainted, so he were took off at once.

Arter a bit she come to, and I says, "I'll jest step to the perlice and see 'ow he's a-goin' on. Where's your father-in-lor?" I asks 'er.

"Oh!" she says, "it's pay day, so he's gone out to ave a good soakin', cos he knowed as Alfred would get the best on 'im if they was to 'ave the licker at 'ome, and that's made my brute of a 'usban' so savidge, cos the old gent's give 'im the slip."

I says, "Well, you keep yourself quiet, and look arter the children, and I'll go and see arter 'im." 'Pon my word, I do believe as she wouldn't 'ave shed a tear if he swallered a pound of arsnic, and no wonder arter the life as he'd led 'er I went to the station-'ouse fust, a-expectin' to be sent to the workus, but when I told 'em my busyness, one on 'em says step in. So I did; and out come the doctor, as says, "We're a-bringin' 'im to, preaps you'd like to see 'im."

I says, "Certingly;" so he led me into a yard, and there I see that Krimling bein' led up and down by two perlice, as 'ad took 'is coat and west-cote off, and at the end of the yard there was two more, one a-standin' on a bench with a pail of water

in 'is 'and, and the other with another pail ready, and as soon as Krimling got up near the perlice with the pail of water, them other two as was 'oldin' of 'im let go on 'im, and he was reglar ducked with one pail arter the other.

"Keep 'im awake! He mustn't go to sleep! I'll teach 'im to pison 'isself," says the doctor.

"I ain't took nothink; indeed I ain't," he 'ollers out.

"I don't believe you," says the doctor; "give 'im two pails more, and then dry 'im down, and roll 'im in a blanket, and don't let 'm go to sleep till he's took a draft as I'll send 'im."

"I won't take nothink," says Krimling.

"Yes, you will," says the perlice; "and you'll get another dose in the mornin' when we takes you afore the magistrit."

"I ain't done nothink," he says, "to be took afore a magistrit for."

"We'll see about that," says the perlice, and into a cell they puts 'im.

I says to the doctor, "It were all sham Abram, as the sayin' is, weren't it?"

He says, "Bless you, no more pisoned than you are."

So 'ome I goes and told 'is wife, as didn't seem comforted much, for she said the brokers would be in the fust thing; and jest then come in the old

father, that orful overtook, as begun a-weepin' and a-wailin,' a-sayin' as he must embrace 'is dyin' boy.

So I says, "All right," and I leads 'im into the back parlour, as he slep in, and I took off 'is anker-cher, and a little boy as lived in the 'ouse next door, 'elped 'im off with his boots, and took off 'is coat and westcote, and then I turned 'im on to the bed jest as he were, a old beast, and locked the door on 'im.

The brokers did come in the next day, and turned the lot out, and that poor woman, she went 'ome to 'er mother; and I never 'eard wot become of the old man; but Krimling, he were put in prison for refusin' to do the work as they set 'im in the workus; and arter that, I think as he took to sellin' dog-collars, but I should say dog-collarin' was more 'is line, a lazy, good-for-nothin', 'ulkin' feller; but he won't take pison agin in a 'urry, I'll lay a penny; not leastways if he thinks as the doctor is near as knows in a instant whether parties is kiddin' or not, cos there's no deceivin' any one over pison, tho' in course you might take in your wife or any other outsiders, not as he took in 'is wife for long, nor yet me, as both on us soon see as it were only a dodge; and as to 'er, poor creeter, she were only faintin' from want, not sorrers over 'im.

Bnt I do 'ope with their spellin' bees and school boards they will learn parties to be decent and sober, but Brown says as that's not be expected as long as this world lasts, and always will stick up for edication, as I do not think much on myself, cos I 'ave seen them go wrong as 'ave 'ad it give 'em liberal, as the sayin' is; not as I 'old with them liberals, as in a genral way is a deal too liberal with other people's property, when they ain't got none of their own. Cos it's all werry well for them as ain't got a feather to fly with, as the sayin' is, to want to 'ave a share of wot others 'ave got, and that's the way we knows as they goes on in them forrin parts with their riverlutions as calls theirselves governments, a-robbin' and a-plunderin' jest the same as Merryker, where they've been and cort that there Blacksnap on the 'ip, as the sayin' is; and I'm sure there's a deal of talk about edication over there, and it certingly ain't tort 'em "to keep their 'ands from pickin' and stealin'," but they're a deal too sharp to want bein' learned anythink, and really, arter all, when you comes to look at people all round, I must say as wot I 'olds about edication is this, as it don't make much difference, for I thinks if you're born a fool, no school nor books would never put brains in your 'ead, and if you've got brains you'll work 'em out for yourself, as is better than all the books and schools as ever was in-

wented, as is werry good places for them as wants to keep the children quiet, as in genral only cares for picters, or to get 'em out of the way, partikler boys as is troublesome in a 'ouse, as anyone knows by Christmas 'olidays, let alone Easter and Midsummer, as in genral be'aves very well for the fust three days and then breaks out, worrets their mother's lives out, and upsets heverything in the 'ouse, from kitchen to nursery, till you're glad to turn 'em out, with a sixpence in their pockets, as they're sure to spend in rubbish, as leads to pills and drafts, as causes a row over it, and werry often pa called in with the cane for to settle it."

"Then," says Mrs. Padwick, "you won't come to a spellin' bee as we're a-gettin' up?"

I says, "I'll come and set by and see fair, but I won't anser nor yet ask no questions, for "them as asks no questions won't 'ear no stories," as the sayin' is, and them as don't anser wou't meet with no reddicule." Cos I knowed wot Miss Pilkinton's game would be a-tryin' to trot me out, and blow about 'er own larnin', as she've been readin' dixonary words from morniu' till night, and a-gettin' Miss Abletts for to ask 'er them, as I considers mean ways; not as I cared, cos if I didu't kuow 'ow to 'old a needle, as is wot Miss Abletts boasts as sho can't do, and Miss Pilkinton says as she couldn't wash and dress a infant, nor yet black

lead a stove, not to save 'er life, I should be ashamed, as is wot I considers gross hignorance, and things as no spellin' bees won't teach 'em; but Mrs. Padwick told me on the quiet, as she rather wanted to trot them old gals out over their larnin'.

So in course I went, but I says to myself, wax shan't be no closer than my lips, cos my spellin' is quite good enuf for me and for all them as likes me, and that all I wants is to please myself and my friends.

THE END.

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